

St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Vincentian

REFLECTIONS 2022

Opening Prayers

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pause and open ourselves to the presence of God

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, by the light of the Holy Spirit, teach the hearts of the faithful and grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolation.

Through Christ Our Lord.

Prayer for the Church and all Vincentians

Compassionate God, we pray for our Church, especially our Pope, Bishops, Priests and Religious. May their leadership strengthen and nourish our Vincentian spirit. We pray for all members of the Vincentian family throughout the world, especially in those countries with which we are twinned.

We pray that like Saint Vincent de Paul, we are open to the presence of Christ in the poor and are always willing to share our spirit and resources.

Prayer for the Society Spirit

Lord Jesus, we share in the faith and courage of our founders, especially Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, Blessed Rosalie Rendu, Fr Gerald Ward and Captain Charles O'Neill. May their spirit be renewed in the Society of today. May we be open to the needs of those suffering poverty and injustice, remaining receptive to the grace of the Holy Spirit. We pray that we build a sense of community wherever our members are gathered.

Prayer for Reconciliation

Holy Spirit, we pray that the St Vincent de Paul Society be a place in which the First Peoples of Australia are welcomed and deeply respected. May the Elders be blessed and honoured.

May this sacred land of ours truly inspire us to come together as one. Renew our hearts as we heal one another and build a future based on mercy, justice, faith, hope and love. May we listen and learn from each other as we walk together in a profound spirit of reconciliation.

Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen.



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We acknowledge that we are meeting today on the lands of the [insert Traditional Owner's name] people and we wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Custodians.

We acknowledge the richness, diversity, and sophistication of the cultures of First Nations peoples.

We acknowledge with sorrow the wrongs of the past that have taken place and continue into today.

We pay deep respects to Elders past and present and honour the strong leadership that is evident in the emerging Elders of tomorrow.

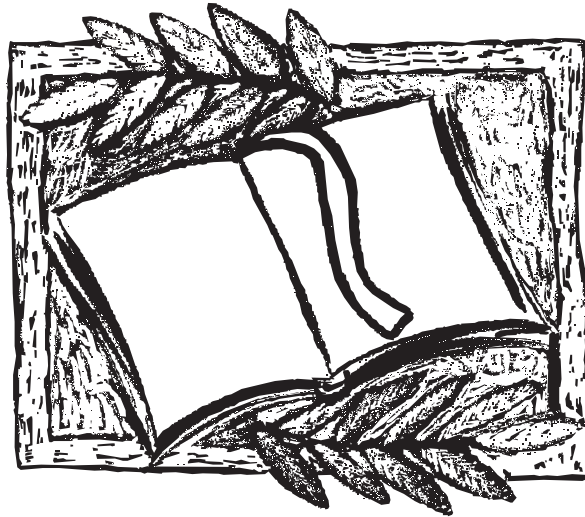
We hope to partner together and work to build a more just and compassionate society for the Traditional Owners of this land.



The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

First Quarter 2022



Liturgical Year: C

(January—February—March 2022)

Available on [SVdPUSA.org](https://www.SVdPUSA.org)





HOW TO LEAD THE VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS IN A CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION:

Leader describes to the group the process which is going to take place:

- Provide a copy for each member of your Conference for their personal reflection
- Stress that sharing is not compulsory and mention the need for confidentiality
- Ask, or assign, different members to read the different sections:
 - Gospel reading
 - Reflection
 - Vincentian Meditation

OPENING PRAYER/QUIETING DOWN PERIOD

Leader invites group to:

- Become relaxed and aware of God's presence with us
- "Let Go" of distractions and quietly pray to the Holy Spirit

READING OF THE VINCENTIAN WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Each section is read aloud, slowly and prayerfully, by the different members
- Hearing different voices will allow different emphasis on words/phrases

QUIET PERIOD

Leader invites everyone:

- To quietly reflect on the readings and notice if anything strikes them
- Introduces the Discussion Question suggested in the Reflection
- Allows 2-3 minutes of quiet – don't hurry this. God speaks to us in the silence.

SHARING

Leader invites members who wish to share on the Discussion Question, or on how the one of the readings struck them. Possibly not everyone will share, but time should be allowed for each person who wishes to share his/her thoughts. It is important that you resist the urge either to prod members to share, or to try to "fill the silence" with your own thoughts.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader closes the Prayer Reflection by beginning the Closing Prayer, and all answer the response (in bold).

(This entire process should take about 10-15 minutes)

INTRODUCTION

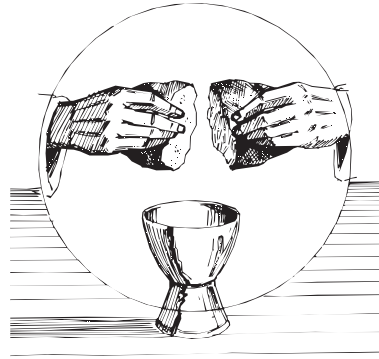


St. Vincent de Paul never wrote a book about his spiritual teachings. But we find the living voice of the saint in his letters and conferences in which he trained his followers for the mission of service to the poor.

The two fundamental sources of his teaching are the GOSPEL and LIFE. He wanted his followers to put the whole of the Gospel into the whole of their lives, and he never wearied of deepening both with all the faith that God had put into his heart. That is why all that Vincent says to us has the simplicity of our everyday life and the penetrating strength of the Word of God.

The Vincentian Weekly Reflections are therefore offered to all who strive to serve the poor in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. The prayer and reflections are based on the Sunday Gospel of the Liturgical Calendar, together with the feast days of some of the saints of our Vincentian Family. Each reflection offers a time for prayer, silence and discussion so that our everyday life, like Vincent, can become penetrated with the strength of the Word of God.

You may want to run copies for each member of your Conference so that they may take them home for personal reflection during the week.



LITURGICAL YEAR C First Quarter - 2022

JANUARY

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|---|
| <i>January</i> | 1 | <i>Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God</i> |
| <i>January</i> | 2 | Epiphany of the Lord |
| <i>January</i> | 9 | Baptism of the Lord |
| <i>January</i> | 16 | Second Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| <i>January</i> | 23 | Third Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| <i>January</i> | 30 | Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time |

FEBRUARY

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------|---|
| <i>February</i> | 6 | Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| <i>February</i> | 7 | <i>Feast of Blessed Rosalie Rendu, D.C.</i> |
| <i>February</i> | 13 | Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| <i>February</i> | 20 | Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time |
| <i>February</i> | 27 | Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time |

MARCH

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <i>March</i> | 6 | First Sunday of Lent |
| <i>March</i> | 13 | Second Sunday of Lent |
| <i>March</i> | 20 | Third Sunday of Lent |
| <i>March</i> | 27 | Fourth Sunday of Lent |

SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

January 1, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 2:16-21)

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Reflection:

Because Mary's conception and giving birth happened under such extraordinary circumstances we might think that Mary took all this for granted and that it was easy for her. The central lines to the gospel suggest other wise: "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." This suggests that Mary's on-going yes to God wasn't really very easy at all. The only way she continued to be faithful was that she took a contemplative stance: reflecting, pondering, praying. Mary shows us the way: fidelity to God's way means we, too, must adopt a contemplative stance before God and the mystery of salvation. (Living Liturgy, p.30)

Vincentian Meditation:

Vincentians are called to be contemplatives in action and apostles in prayer. Prayer and action go hand in hand in a healthy Vincentian spirituality. St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac were incredibly active, but they were also persons of deep prayer. An apostolic spirituality is at its best when it holds prayer and action in tension with one another. The person who loves God "with the sweat of his brow and the strength of his arms" as Vincent said, knows how to distinguish between beautiful theoretical thoughts about an abstract God and real personal contact with the living Lord contemplated and served in his suffering people. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 176)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How can you become a better "contemplative in action" this year?

Closing Prayer:

Mary, to you who are the Mother of God, we now pray:
-help us to see and hear what God is revealing in our lives.

Mary, wellspring of grace and peace,
-help us to take time to ponder and reflect.

Mary, you who are a "contemplative in action",
-help us to contemplate Jesus in his suffering people.

Amen



THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

January 2, 2022

Gospel: (Matthew 2:1-12)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ...Herod sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child..." After their audience with the King, they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reflection:

The three Magi from the east must have been men of means; they traveled a long distance to find the "newborn King of the Jews" and to offer him precious gifts, trusting in only the star's guidance. They must also have recognized the prior generosity of God, for their initial response in finding the Child was to "do him homage." The symbolic meaning of their treasures is: giving the gold was a response of sharing their possessions; giving the frankincense was a response of reverence and gratitude for God's gifts to them; giving the myrrh was a response of sharing of obedience in following God's revelation in the star. (Living Liturgy, p.32)

Vincenian Meditation:

The Magi came to worship the newborn king. Are we capable of that ourselves? Are we willing to bow down before the Lord and pay him homage? Are we able to make Christ the *absolute center* of our lives? Or do we clutch alien gods as Herod did? These are manifold: power, popularity, security, comfort, only to name a few. Most such gods are reflections of our inner selves. They mirror forth our own desire to be the center of the universe. Unlike Herod, the Magi bowed down before the Lord and worshipped him. May we also bow down before him in the person of the poor, who are—in a phrase we use so often that it can easily lose its meaning—our "Lords and Masters" as Vincent said.

(Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 81)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How can we better serve "our Lords and Masters" the poor?

Closing Prayer:

O Lord, bring light to the darkness as we search for you,
-Let your light shine upon us.

As the Magi bowed down in homage,
-May you be the absolute center of our lives.

May we, like the Magi, offer you our gifts each day,
-As we discover you in the lives of the poor.

Amen



THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

January 9, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 3:15-16; 21-22)

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Reflection:

As Jesus was baptized by John, so must we be baptized –not just in the waters of repentance but by the Holy Spirit and fire which calls us, too, to give ourselves to God. Thus receiving the Spirit in our own baptism manifests our identity as ones who are saved, renewed, justified and heirs of eternal life, that is, those who also share in God's life. Being baptized by fire means that we share in Jesus' mission. We come to an appreciation of all this when we, like Jesus, contemplate this mystery of baptism in prayer. As we appreciate more and more who we are and what we are to do, we gradually come to realize that *we ourselves* are God's presence for another. (Living Liturgy, p.36)

Vincenzian Meditation:

The fire of the Holy Spirit gives us the grace to be God's presence for another: "The best thing to give...to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a mother, reverence; to your father, conduct that will make him proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all people, charity." All that was precisely what Jesus Christ did. That, too, was what His Mother did. It was what St. Vincent de Paul and all God's saints did. May we be strengthened to do likewise. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.728)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

What are the "best things" that the fire of the Holy Spirit calls you to give?

Closing Prayer:

The heavens are opened and the Spirit of God comes to rest upon Jesus,

-Spirit of God, rest upon us

For all who have been baptized by water and the fire of the Holy Spirit,

-may we be the presence of God to one another.

Christ, the Anointed, you began your public ministry after your baptism,

-may we offer person-to-person service to the suffering

Christ, the Beloved, you emptied yourself in love for the human family,

-open our hearts to the poorest and most abandoned in the spirit of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic.

Amen



SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 16, 2022

Gospel: (John 2:1-11)

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "*Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.*" His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."...When the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from, said to the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good win until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

Reflection:

We identify with Mary's sensitivity in noticing that the wine was running short and Jesus'sensitivity in keeping the miracle quiet. The purpose of the miracle, then, wasn't to save the wedding couple's day or to draw attention to Jesus. The purpose runs deeper: the sign revealed Jesus' glory. The wedding feast as an opportunity for epiphany and belief. The epiphany (manifestations and revelations) of Jesus' glory is a sign of the persistence of God's overtures of love to us—God reveals glory to us in many ways to make sure we catch it—and the depths of God's love, so much so that we are espoused to God. Belief entails a *Who* rather than a *what*. Our own encounters with Jesus in prayer, through others, in struggling with daily living, are truly epiphanies of God's glory which also invites us to respond to divine Presence with belief. (Living Liturgy, p.42)

Vincentian Meditation:

Epiphany signs might come in many ways—through others in a cry for help, in a lonely person's plea for companionship, in the spontaneous laughter of delight, in the beauty of nature, in the love of family and friends. The challenge to us is to see these as revelations of God's glory, as epiphanies of God's love for us, and an opportunity to respond in belief. Yes, these common, ordinary signs of God's love are all around us. By *responding* to other persons, recognizing them as revelations of God to us, we ourselves also become signs of God's in-breaking, *epiphanies for others*.

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

What "Epiphanies of God's love" have happened in your life?

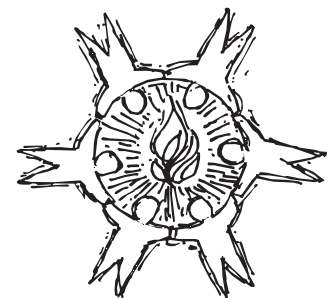
Closing Prayer:

Lord, thank you for all of the "Epiphanies of your Love" in our lives,
-May we find you in all of the common, ordinary signs all around us.

Lord, thank you for our call to be Vincentians,
-May we be the "Epiphany of your love" to those who are suffering.

Lord, thank you for our family and our friends,
-May we share together your hope and love, your laughter and joy.

Amen



THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 23, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 4:14-21)

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll and found the passage where it was written: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”* Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, *“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

Reflection:

We would guess that Jesus introduced a long, pregnant pause, before he said what the synagogue people could hardly expect: *“Today, this Scripture is being fulfilled in your hearing.”* We are still in the time when the scroll has been set aside, when all eyes turn to Jesus, and there is a pregnant pause. Now we—our own lives—fill the meaning of the pregnant pause. We can do so because, like Jesus, in our baptism we also have been anointed with the Spirit. And so, we are called to look for the poor, captive, blind, and oppressed among us. We don’t have to look very far! *“Today this passage has been fulfilled”* is now true only when we ourselves respond to those around us who need a nourishing, strengthening, joyful word. (Living Liturgy, p.46)

Vincenzian Meditation:

In light of Vincent’s regular practice of taking the imitation of Jesus Christ as the model of behavior, the saint, in Jesus’ manner, chose the words of this Gospel: *“He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,”* as the motto of his life and ministry. Jesus modeled doing before teaching. Accordingly, Vincent noted that Jesus first integrated *“fully into his life every type of virtue.”* That was his preparation, after which our Lord, then went on to teach, by preaching the good news of salvation to poor people, and by passing on to his apostles and disciples what they needed to know to become guides for others. As followers of Vincent, we must imitate Christ the Lord, first...imitate his virtues and then we can go out in service to the poor. (Melito, St. Vincent -Windows on His Vision, p. 45)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

How is this Scripture passage from Luke being fulfilled in your life today?

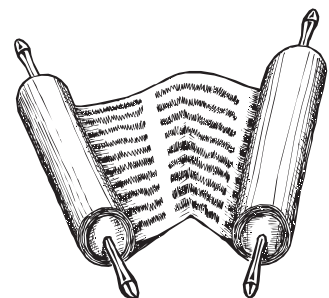
Closing Prayer:

To the indigent and those who are in despair,
-Lord, send us out to bring good news to the poor.

To the abandoned poor of the inner city,
-Lord, send us out to bring good news to the poor.

To the captive, blind and oppressed among us,
-Lord, send us out to bring good news to the poor.

Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 30, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 4:21-30)

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue...and all were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph? He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician heal yourself.' And say 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place." When the people heard all that he was saying, they were filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

Reflection:

As the crowds doubted who Jesus was because of his simple origins, so will others doubt who we are if we courageously live the gospel. No matter what simple origins we might have, our living the gospel is what must shape our everyday choices. This means, for example, that if the chatter around the coffee machine at work grows uncharitable or coarse, we have the courage to walk away. If prejudice exists among our friends and acquaintances, we have the courage to extol the dignity of the minority. We are called to place gospel values before any other values and to be willing to put our lives on the line for them. (Living Liturgy, p.50)

Vincenzian Meditation:

St. Vincent was also from "simple origins" but he also had a striking belief in the power of the gospel. He told us that, "Each one must strive, above all else, to ground himself in this truth: the teaching of Christ can never deceive, while that of the world is always false, since Christ himself declares that the latter is like a house built on sand, whereas he compares his own to a building founded upon a solid rock." For this reason we must always make claim to act according to the maxims of Christ, never according to those of the world. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 150)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

How does your living of the gospel shape your everyday choices?

Closing Prayer:

We pray for the grace to proclaim the gospel in our lives:

-May we live the values that Jesus taught.

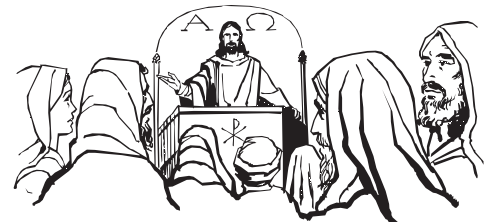
We pray that our words and actions bear witness to Christ,

-May we live the values that Jesus taught.

We pray that we may bring hope and healing to the sick and suffering.

-May we live the values that Jesus taught.

Amen



FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 6, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 5: 1-11)

After he had finished speaking, Jesus said to Simon, “*Put out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch.*” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing...when Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him...Jesus said to Simon, “*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.*” When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Reflection:

Jesus’ power manifested in the great catch of fish brings Peter to confess his sinfulness. But the story does not stop with the confession of unworthiness, but continues with Peter who then “left everything and followed him.” The appearance of God always reveals our own sinfulness, but God’s focus is elsewhere—on our call and our mission. God sees humanity as created to be good, as persons who can choose to respond to God’s call and fulfill the mission God gives. If we look for “large catches of fish” we will miss God’s message. The gospel invites us to look to the simple manifestations of holiness that indicate the presence of God, for example, in the generosity of so many volunteers, in the faithfulness of husbands and wives, in the unselfishness of parish workers, in the uncomplaining suffering of the sick, in the gracious wisdom of the elderly. The “yes” response to our call is to imitate these good behaviors and by so doing we extend God’s reign. (Living Liturgy, p.54)

Vincentian Meditation:

The holiness of St. Vincent and of each one of us in the last analysis is a gift of God. The holiness of a saint is a sharing in the holiness of God Himself, and we recognize holiness when we see the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the life of a person. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.316)

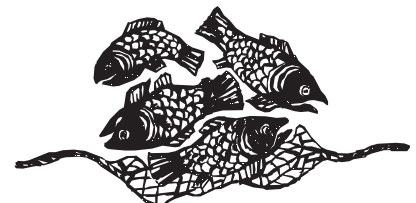
Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How have you seen the presence of God in the “simple manifestations of holiness” in those around you?

Closing Prayer:

- O God, there are those who do not know your presence,
-may our lives be a sign of faith for them.
- O God, there are those who live in fear and doubt,
-may our lives be a sign of hope for them.
- O God, there are those who do not experience your love,
-may our lives be a sign of love for them.
- O God, there are those who are poor and oppressed by others,
-may our lives be a sign of justice for them.

Amen



FEAST OF BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU, D.C.

February 7

Gospel: (Mark 6:53-56)

After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there. As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him. They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.

Reflection:

On April 23, 1833, Frederic Ozanam's twentieth birthday, six students met in the office of their mentor Emmanuel Bailly, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was born. They resolved to respond to Christ's call by dedicating themselves to the poor after the example of St. Vincent de Paul. They asked Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, for the names and addresses of several families in need. Sr. Rosalie was known as "The Mother of the Poor" in the Mouffetard Quarter of Paris. She taught Frederic much about the poor and how to minister to them with love and respect. The first members of the Society were determined not only to bring bread, but, above all, friendship to the poor.
(US Manual of the SSVDP, p.179)

Vincentian Meditation:

"Last night I dreamed that I stood at the judgment seat of God. God received me with great severity and was about to pronounce my sentence when, suddenly, I was surrounded by an immense crowd of people carrying old boots, shoes, and hats. They presented all these things to God saying: 'She was the one who gave us all these things.' Then Jesus looked at me and said, 'Because you gave all these old clothes in my Name, I open heaven to you. Enter, for all eternity.'" (Words of Blessed Rosalie Rendu, DC)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

What do you think God will say to you as you stand at the judgment seat?

Closing Prayer:

Holy God, we thank you for the gift to us of Bl. Rosalie Rendu,
-grant us the grace to be kind and loving.

For the poor we serve,
-grant us the grace to bring your help and solace.

Provident God, provide what we need to give to the poor,
-grant us the grace to lighten their burdens.

For all the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,
-grant us the grace to live the spirit of Bl. Rosalie Rendu.

Amen



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 13, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 6:17,20-26)

Jesus raising his eyes toward his disciples said: *“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”*

Reflection:

The blessing is Jesus who stands on level ground with the poor, hungry, weeping outcasts. Jesus is an epiphany of God’s presence among all those who had been excluded. The gospel also indicates the decisiveness of choice: blessing or woe. There are two paths in life one can follow, and either one is with Jesus or against Jesus. The lure is to be consoled *now*, have our fill *now*, laugh *now*, be respected *now*. Jesus is showing another way: our condition now doesn’t matter so long as we trust and hope in the Lord *now*. Blessedness isn’t a matter of social status, satisfaction, possessions, respect, etc; it is a matter of keeping our own eyes glued on Jesus. (Living Liturgy, p.58)

Vincentian Meditation:

The heart of Jesus’ preaching is the Beatitudes. They speak of basic attitudes of being and dispositions in life. Vincentians are Beatitude people; they opt for the Beatitudes that confront them with decisive choices concerning earthly goods. The Beatitudes purify their hearts in order to teach them to love God above all things. Vincentians understand Pope John Paul II’s words: *“The Beatitudes are a call to action.”* (US Manual of the SSVDP, p.20)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

Which Beatitude speaks most to your heart?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to know the grace of being poor and hungry,
-O God, teach us the Beatitudes.

For the grace to know the grace of weeping and laughter,
-O God, teach us the Beatitudes.

For the grace to choose blessing and not woe,
-O God, teach us the Beatitudes.

For the grace to be true Vincentians,
-O God, teach us the Beatitudes.

Amen



*“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.”*

Lk 6:20

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 20, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 6:27-38)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"To you who hear, I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other as well, and from the person who takes you cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you...Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you."*

Reflection:

We have here, for those "who hear," the deeper challenge beyond the Beatitudes. Not everyone can hear and live this challenge; this is why it is so difficult to establish God's reign. Jesus lays out the concrete conduct that establishes the kingdom, and it truly is extraordinary in its demands. True this extraordinary way of relating to others isn't normal! It is divine! God has acted toward us already with extraordinary kindness and mercy, already giving us a full measure of blessedness. Can we afford not to hear?

(Living Liturgy, p.62)

Vincetian Meditation:

All our lives we are preparing and choosing the sort of judge we will have at the end of our lives. It is the compassionate and understanding judgments which we make about others which are fashioning the judge we ourselves will meet at the moment of death. If our judgements have been harsh and unsympathetic toward others, then the judge we are choosing for ourselves at the end of our lives will be a harsh and unsympathetic one. We must draw that conclusion from our Lord's own words: "...because the standard you use will be the standard used for you." And so we can say, "With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged." (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.191)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

What is the greatest challenge for you: To stop judging or condemning; or to be forgiving?

Closing Prayer:

When we are weighed down by burdens,

-Give us the grace not to judge others.

When we need hope and peace,

-Give us the grace not to condemn others.

When we forget your presence among us,

-Give us the grace to forgive.

Amen

Forgive and you will be forgiven.



Lk 6:37

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 27, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 6:39-45)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Why look at the speck in your brother's eye when you miss the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck from your eye,' yet fail yourself to see the plank lodged in your own? Hypocrite, remove the plank from your own eye first; then you will see clearly enough to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Reflection:

Most of us think that we have more forgiveness to give than to receive. We like to think that more people are unfair or unjust to us than we are to them. Because we think in that way, we find it hard to offer forgiveness, real forgiveness, to others. We think much more of how hard it is for us to forgive than we do about the difficulty that others have in forgiving us. We measure out our forgiveness like money, very carefully and with much calculation. I doubt if we use the same care when we come to measuring the cost of that forgiveness which we expect and receive from others. If we spent more time thinking about what it costs others to forgive us, rather than about what it costs us to forgive others, we would be more successful in taking resentment out of our hearts. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.566)

Vincencian Meditation:

For Vincentians, who think much about the poverty and hunger in our country, and of what we could do to alleviate it, how much thought have we given to forgiveness? It is probably true that the very fact of the present unequal distribution of wealth in the United States causes resentment in the hearts of many of our poor brothers and sisters. Where there is resentment, there is need for offering forgiveness. So we, who have more of the world's goods, may be more in need than we realize of receiving forgiveness. St. Vincent is quoted as saying that "it is only because of our love, only our love, that the poor will forgive us the bread we give to them." Today, as in Vincent and Frederic's day, people do not live by bread alone. The bread we offer must be seasoned well with the condiments of justice and love. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.566-567)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you found that the poor indeed "forgive us" when we serve in love?

Closing Prayer:

When we feel resentment in our hearts,
-Lord, give us the grace to forgive.

When we see the speck in our brother or sister's eye,
-Lord, give us the grace to see the plank in our own.

When we serve our poor brothers and sisters,
-Lord, give us the grace to serve with love.

Amen



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

March 6, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 4:1-13)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. ...The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered: "*It is written: One does not live on bread alone.*"...The devil then said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory...All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus replied: "*It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.*" ...Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him in reply, "*It also says: You shall not put the Lord, you God, to the test.*" When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Reflection:

Try as he might by offering every attractive thing—wealth, power, esteem—the devil couldn't prove stronger. The gentle persuasion of prayer and fasting kept Jesus stronger and able to resist temptation. Not even the Son of God was exempt from being tested!

Temptation, then, isn't necessarily a sign of great sinfulness. It is an occasion for showing that our lives are turned to God, for remaining steadfast in the faith that we profess. Lent isn't simply our desert time to overcome temptation. It is also a springtime of renewed relationship to God. It is a time when we are strengthened, with the gentle warmth of God's Spirit leading us, to overcome even temptations to wealth, power, and esteem. (Living Liturgy, p.70)

Vincentian Meditation:

I urge you to reflect, during Lent, on the temptations that we inevitable meet as the Spirit guides us through the desert. None of us is spared these. The Spirit is a pillar of fire to lighten our path on the journey, but daily events allure us to follow other pillars of fire as we wander through the desert. But we find our hunger satisfied, our thirst quenched, only in the person of a loving, provident God who walks with us always. This Lent all of us must ask ourselves: what is the greatest temptation I face as a follower of St. Vincent?
(Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 95)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

What is the greatest temptation you face as a follower of Vincent and Frederic?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to be detached from wealth,
-Jesus, we turn to you.

For the grace to be detached from power,
-Jesus, we turn to you.

For the grace to be detached from esteem,
-Jesus, we turn to you.

Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

March 13, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 9: 28-36)

Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white....Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying. While he was speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them...Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "*This is my chosen Son, listen to him.*" After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

Reflection:

The only way for us to "remain" in Jesus' glory is to accept the baptismal challenge to recognize Jesus as the beloved Son and to "*Listen to him.*" This means that we take to heart gospel living. This Sunday we are given a glimpse of glory to help us on our journey of a lifetime of self-emptying. This tells us something about how we might keep Sundays. If each Sunday is a day of rest, a time to be good to ourselves, to do something special that is uplifting, to enter into a moment of glory by praying, we would be better fortified to continue our journey. (Living Liturgy, p.74)

Vincentian Meditation:

Though God is utterly transcendent, do we not *experience* the self-communication of God at times? Looking back at times, do we not perceive that we have been transformed by events that were beyond our control, often by our contact with the poor, by their faith, their gratitude, their persistent trust in God's presence and providence? Are there not "angels" who enter our lives and touch us deeply because of their authentic witness to the gospels, because of their persevering hope in the face of sickness, suffering and death? Are there not occasions when we are deeply touched by the loyalty of friends, by their faithful love? Are these not ways in which we glimpse God's freely-bestowed presence in our own human experience? I suggest this Lent that we focus on growing in awareness of God's self-gift, in its many expressions, and raise our hearts and voices to the Lord in gratitude. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 99)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

How have you *experienced* God touching your life?

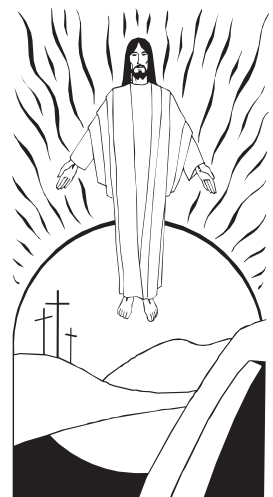
Closing Prayer:

Christ appeared in the splendor of a vision to his disciples,
-may we find the face of Jesus in ordinary events of our life.

For all Vincentians who dedicate themselves to the service,
-may their love and justice transfigure the lives of the poor.

We bring all of our petitions before God,
-may God's face shine upon us.

Amen



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 20, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 13: 1-9)

Jesus said, "Those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And then he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardner, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' The gardner said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.'"

Reflection:

The parable of the non-fruit-bearing fig tree describes the fate of those who do not repent. Even though God gives us everything we need for our journey toward salvation, we ourselves need to "cultivate and fertilize" our spiritual lives. We "grumble" our way through life—we judge others, fail to live up to our baptismal commitments, do not heed all the warnings given us. Jesus is quite clear in his message: "bear fruit or be "cut down." The "fertilizer" is the charity, fasting, and prayer of our Christian penance. Repentance is "cultivating" the soil so we can bear fruit. Repentance is changing one's mind, letting go of the narrowness of our own perception of how life should be and embracing the expansiveness of God's plan for salvation. Repentance is really conversion. And God waits everyday of our lives for us to bear fruit. (Living Liturgy, p.78)

Vincentian Meditation:

Conversion for us as followers of Vincent and Frederic will mean allowing Jesus and the poor to invade the citadels of our minds and of our hearts. Our minds and hearts are like fortresses. We live within them, but are reluctant to admit Jesus and his poor into the very center of them. We will allow Jesus in just so far, but we often by our action or inaction show him that we don't wish Him to take us over completely. He is continually asking us to surrender to him. He is asking us continually to let go, and we insist on holding on. Conversion or repentance is about surrender. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.698)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

What conversion do you need, so that you can "bear fruit?"

Closing Prayer:

The discipline of Lent calls us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus,
-may your love guide us to conversion.

Lord, you came to give sight to the blind,
-open our eyes to see beyond our own selfishness.

Lord, you came to bring good news to the poor,
-may our actions bring hope to those we serve.

Lord, give us the grace to "fertilize and cultivate" our spiritual life,
-so that we may bear fruit.

Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

March 27, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 15:1-3,11-32)

Jesus told this parable: "A man had two sons, and the younger said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself ...to tend swine. ...Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; make me one of your hired servants.'"

Reflection:

It is the father in the parable who models for us the mercy of our heavenly Father. The prodigal son is brought to repentance because he was "dying from hunger." There is nothing he does to deserve the response of the father except to repent and to return. What leads *us* to decide to repent? Like the prodigal son, "changing our minds" is probably precipitated by some specific catalyst—probably not physical hunger, but possible by spiritual hunger. The penance of Lent can be the external factor that brings us to realize our life is much richer when we turn from our sinful ways and turn to God who gives life.

(Living Liturgy, p.84)

Vincenzian Meditation:

This parable tells us most about the meaning of conversion, and is found in two verbs. The request the younger son makes to his father is this: "Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me." Toward the end of the parable, when the younger son returns home, the request he makes of his father is this: "Father, make me one of your hired servants." Between the "give me" at the beginning and the "make me" at the end lies the story of conversion. There is an altogether different attitude of mind expressed in the "give me my money" and "make me one of your hired servants." In the story of conversion you will find that the starting point is a selfish demand, and the finishing point is a readiness to be a servant. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.698)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

Have you experienced a conversion from "give me" to "make me your servant?"

Closing Prayer:

As we abandon ourselves to God's will,
-Father, we come to you.

As we allow prayer to change our lives,
-Father, we come to you.

As we move from "give me" to "make me your servant,"
-Father, we come to you.

Amen



LITURGICAL YEAR-Cycle C Second Quarter-2022

APRIL

| | |
|----------|-------------------------|
| April 3 | Fifth Sunday of Lent |
| April 10 | Palm Sunday |
| April 15 | Good Friday |
| April 17 | Easter Sunday |
| April 24 | Second Sunday of Easter |

MAY

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------|
| May 1 | Third Sunday of Easter |
| May 8 | Fourth Sunday of Easter |
| May 9 | <i>St. Louise de Marillac</i> |
| May 15 | Fifth Sunday of Easter |
| May 22 | Sixth Sunday of Easter |
| May 29 | Feast of the Ascension |

JUNE

| | |
|---------|---|
| June 5 | Pentecost |
| June 12 | Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity |
| June 19 | The Body and Blood of Christ |
| June 24 | Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus |
| June 25 | Feast of Nativity of Saint John the Baptist |
| June 26 | Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

April 3, 2022

Gospel: (John 8:1-11)

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Reflection:

Serving means following; following Jesus means serving. Also, serving means entering into Jesus' death – like Jesus we must also be the grain that dies to produce much fruit. When we follow Jesus into his service, we, too, have the pledge of receiving the same honor that the Father bestows on Jesus. We see Jesus by *being* Jesus. It's that simple! And that challenging. We see Jesus in those who lay down their life in servanthood and others see Jesus in us when we are servants. (Living Liturgy, p.94)

Vincentian Meditation:

In the Manual of the Society, we read: If Jesus stands at the center of Vincentian spirituality, the poor stand next to him. Jesus' words, "*You always will have the poor with you,*" are the *reason for being* for Vincentian existence. Blessed Frederic said: "Sons of Saint Vincent de Paul, let us learn of him to forget ourselves, to devote ourselves to the service of God and the good of men. Let us learn of him that holy preference which shows most love to those who suffer most." Mercy is a facet of charity that calls us, first to identify in spirit with our suffering brothers and sisters. Mercy calls also for outward signs and actions. We weep with those who weep, we rejoice with those who rejoice. We empathize; we reach out in compassion. (US Manual, P.16-17)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How do we see Jesus in those who lay down their life in servanthood and how do others see Jesus in us when we are servants?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, we seek refuge in your loving heart and so we pray:

-Jesus, keep us close to you.

For the grace to be your servant,

-Jesus, keep us close to you.

For all members of the Society who model a life of service,

-Jesus, keep them close to you.

For our families and friends who teach us how to be compassionate,

-Jesus, keep them close to you.

For all those who are suffering, especially the sick and the dying,

-Jesus, keep them close to you. Amen



PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

April 10, 2022

Gospel: (John 12:12-16)

When the great crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet him, and cried out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel." Jesus found an ass and sat upon it, as is written: *Fear no more, O daughter Zion; see, your king comes, seated upon an ass's colt.* His disciples did not understand this at first, but when Jesus had been glorified they remembered that these things were written about him and that they had done this for him.

Reflection:

The essence of discipleship is that we carry his cross. Disciples go wherever the Master goes. Coming to understand who Jesus is, his mission, and how that relates to us his disciples is not an easy task; it takes a lifetime. Like Jesus, to be faithful followers by taking up our cross means we will *feel* this in the depths of our humanity: we will suffer, we will lose heart, we will cry out to God to take life's miserable lot away from us. But also like Jesus we have divine life which gives us the strength to carry our cross. It is divine life pulsating within us – which we first receive at our baptism – that raises up our humanity enabling us to be faithful disciples carrying our crosses. (Living Liturgy, p.98)

Vincenzian Meditation:

Jesus' dying love gives meaning to the many "crosses" his followers are called to bear...the cross today may take the following forms especially:

- laboring daily, and perseveringly, in the service of the poor
- sharing the helplessness and pain of the marginalized
- standing in solidarity with the abandoned and suffering
- accepting painful events, that we can do nothing about
- bearing sickness, our own and that of others
- coming to grips with aging
- enduring the death of friends and family

The following of the crucified Lord is the supreme act of faith; it is a surrender in hope and love into the incomprehensible mystery of God. (Maloney, He Hears the Cry of the Poor, p. 46-47)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

What "crosses" have you carried in being Jesus' disciple?

Closing Prayer:

As we enter the mystery of the passion of Christ, may our hearts be touched anew by the depth of his love, and so we pray:

-Christ, our Savior, hear our prayer.

That this Holy Week may deepen our understanding of the cross,

-Christ, our Savior, hear our prayer.

For all who suffer injustice and abuse, may we help them carry their cross,

-Christ, our Savior, hear our prayer. Amen



EASTER SUNDAY

April 17, 2022

Gospel: (John 20:1-9)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Reflection:

We can hardly grasp the joy and glory of Easter Sunday! The disciples didn't understand, but they came to believe. So can we. Easter Sunday is more than a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. It is also an invitation to each of us to preach the gospel and take our place in the long line of witnesses to Jesus' resurrected life. This is why we are so awed at the mystery: not only that Jesus was raised from the dead but that God entrusts us with Jesus' mission and to be witness of God's mighty deed of resurrection. It appears as though God trusts us a great deal. (Living Liturgy, p.112)

Vincentian Meditation:

St. Vincent wrote: "My friend, you belong to God. Let this reality color your entire existence. Give yourself up to God ceaselessly with every beat of your heart. We are commissioned not only to God, but to cause Him to be loved. It is not enough for us to love God, if our neighbor does not love Him also. Only through the charity of our Lord can we transform the world. The wonderful thing is that in letting His love pass through us, we are ourselves converted. The poor are our masters; they are our kings; we must obey them. It is no exaggeration to call them this, since our Lord is in the poor"

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Name the "Easter" people you have known - true witnesses of God's love.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, in your resurrection, you brought joy to the disciples,
- fill us with joy.

Lord, in your resurrection, there is hope for a world suffering from injustice,

-enliven our hope.

Lord, in your resurrection, you gifted the fearful with peace,

-deepen our peace. Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 24, 2022

Gospel: (John 20:19-31)

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "*Peace, be with you.*" Then he said to Thomas, "*Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.*" Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God." Jesus said to him, "*Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*"

Reflection:

The remarkable thing about belief is that it always has room for unbelief. Like mystery itself, belief isn't something we have and that's it. There is always room to grow in our belief, just as there is always room for our unbelief. We call Thomas "doubting Thomas" and so he was. Truth be told, so are all of us. There come times in our lives when we are simply overcome with emptiness and absence—perhaps the death of a loved one, the painful illness of a small child, loss of a job. At these times doubt or unbelief are natural. This doesn't mean we have lost our faith, it means that at these times we need to keep our eyes focused on the risen Christ and, in due time, we know the Lord is with us inviting us to belief. (Living Liturgy, p.116)

Vincentian Meditation:

Blessed Frederic Ozanam wrote "... the poor we see with the eyes of flesh; they are there and we can put finger and hand in their wounds and the scars of the crown of thorns are visible on their foreheads; and at this point incredulity no longer has place and we should fall at their feet and say with the Apostle, *Tu est Dominus et Deus meus (You are my Lord and my God!)*. You are our masters, and we will be your servants. You are for us the sacred images of that God whom we do not see, and not knowing how to love Him otherwise shall we not love Him in your person?"

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Share a time when you moved from unbelief to belief.

Closing Prayer:

Risen Lord, your resurrection brought joy to all believers,
- **give joy to those who live in sadness.**

Risen Lord, your resurrection brought hope to all believers
- **give hope to those who live in despair.**

Risen Lord, your resurrection turned unbelief to belief,
- **give faith to those who live in doubt.**

Risen Lord, your resurrection gifted the fearful with peace,
- **give peace to those who live in suffering. Amen**



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 1, 2022

Gospel: (John 21:1-19)

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Reflection:

Jesus "was made known" in repentance and forgiveness. Forgiveness is an encounter with the risen Christ. When we offer and receive forgiveness our hearts ought to burn because of the encounter with the risen Christ within us. This is resurrected life: "You are forgiven." This is our witness to the resurrection: "I forgive you." We must walk and act like a forgiven people.

Vincenzian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: The Conference meeting is the heart from which SVDP activity radiates and the sanctuary where its work is organized. The meeting provides a privileged occasion wherein the love of Christ is manifested member to member, where members are open, one to another, embracing each other as brother and sister, where the healing presence of Christ can be experienced and can grow to overflowing dimensions that can be shared with others. (US Manual, P.95)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Are our Conference meetings truly a place of forgiveness and peace?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, your resurrection brought forgiveness to the disciples,

-fill us with your peace!

For the grace to labor in your name,

-fill us with your strength!

For the grace to forgive and to be forgiven,

-fill us with your compassion!

Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 8, 2022

Gospel: (John 10:27-30)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all[a]; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Reflection:

The good shepherd is concerned about, cares for, and protects the sheep even to the point of laying down his life for the sheep. The good shepherd fulfills the obligation of relationship. The relationship between shepherd and sheep ("I know mine and mine know me") is likened to the relationship between the Father and the Son. This relationship requires of us disciples the same mission—to lay down our lives, too. Shepherding is serious business. It means that we cannot run away, but we must lay down our lives for the sake of others. It calls us to commit ourselves to good deeds, such as caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, forgiving those who wrong us, loving others as God has loved us. These good deeds are the very "stuff" of our everyday living and loving, in our families and in our service to the poor.

Vincentian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: To those served, Vincentians are expected to give the same deep and serious thought that they give to their own blood family. Sharing does not consist merely in the distribution of material goods; it also implies that our personal resources and potential of mind and heart, of time and influence, are placed at the service of others. Sharing means taking part in the joys and sorrows, in the worries and the hopes of others. It equally involves a readiness, on the part of the members and the Society, to accept help, suggestions, advice, encouragement and collaboration. Sharing means being willing to be disturbed. It is a sign of the true spirit of charity to be ready to share ideas and to accept giving in on some of our own. We are all poor in one way or another. That is perhaps what draws us all closer to one another and to Him who consented to share our humanity. (US Manual, P.49)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How are we "Good Shepherds" to each other and to the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, give us the grace to be "Good Shepherds,"

-strengthen us to be hope for others.

For those who live in loneliness,

-may they know the healing bond of friendship.

For those whose labor is burdensome and whose wages are inadequate,

-may they receive employment worthy of their dignity.

For the sick and the dying,

**-may they know Christ's healing through all
Vincentians. Amen**



FEAST OF ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC

May 9

Gospel: (Matthew 25: 31-46)

The King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me...I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."

Reflection:

Louise de Marillac, (1591-1660), married Antoine LeGras and they had a son whom they named Michel, but at the age of 34 she became a widow. Vincent de Paul became her spiritual director and under his guidance she began caring for the poor and visiting the Confraternities of Charity. Vincent and Louise co-founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and dedicated them to serve the poor with humility, simplicity and charity. In 1960, Pope John XXIII proclaimed Louise the patron saint of all Christian social workers.

Vincentian Meditation:

Louise de Marillac said: "Above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care." (Gibson and Kneaves, Praying with Louise, p.. 72)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

In what ways do you see your Conference serving the poor today in the spirit of Louise: in gentleness... loving them tenderly and respecting them deeply?

Closing Prayer:

Compassionate Christ, Louise ministered to the needs of your people,

-give us courage to walk in her footsteps.

You inspired Louise with a great love for the poor and the abandoned,

-grant us the grace to serve with the same spirit of love.

You inspired Louise with compassion for the destitute and sorrowful,

-may we love them tenderly and respect them deeply.

May the Vincentian Family continue to grow throughout the world,

-so that the poor will know God's love in a tangible way. Amen



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 15, 2022

Gospel: (John 13:31-33a, 34-35)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Reflection:

How do we let everyone know that we are His disciples? This commandment came from a place of the deepest love that Christ has for us. How do we then show that love to those around us?

Vincentian Meditation:

In the Manual we read: For Frederic, Vincentians transcended racial and national prejudices. They judged women and men strictly on their need, not on their color, nationality, education, morality. Vincentians are non-judgmental. A non-judgmental attitude excludes assigning guilt or innocence, or judging a person's degree of responsibility for their needs or problems. St. Vincent appealed: "Deal with neighbors in a gentle, humble and loving manner, even with the most hardened of sinners, and never employ a vehement accusation or reproaches or harsh language toward anyone whomsoever."(US Manual, P.24-25)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Do we need to show love to become more non-judgmental, to let go of some prejudices?

Closing Prayer:

With grateful hearts we pray for the grace of pruning,

-Grant us the grace to be kind and loving.

For the poor we serve,

-Grant us the grace to be non-judgmental.

For the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,

-Grant us the grace to live the spirit of Frederic and Vincent. Amen



SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 22, 2022

Gospel: (John 14:23-29)

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Reflection:

The Gospel boils down to something really quite simple: Remain in Jesus' love... "Abide in me as I abide in you"...keep the commandments, love one another. Yes, the command is simple, but the demand is imposing: lay down our lives. Keeping God's commandments is laying down our lives—we surrender our will to doing God's will and in this is the dying. Caring for and reaching out to others is laying down our lives—also a dying. Doing little things every day, not because we have to but because we see the other as the beloved of God, is dying. We choose all these and other ways of dying because we know this is the cost of discipleship; this is why we need the gift of the Spirit; this is why we prepare for Pentecost. (Living Liturgy, p.132)

Vincentian Meditation:

St. Vincent was a great inspiration to Frederic Ozanam in his life, work and writings. For Vincent, however, and for Frederic, it was the charity of Christ which pressed them on to do what they did for the poor of their time. It is a mystery how God could love mankind, disfigured by sin and infidelity. Likewise, it is a mystery of God that you, as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, are able to love people who are disfigured by the effects of poverty and injustice, and who are often so unattractive in their poverty. As you work for and visit the poor, take heart from the thought that you are reflecting into this dark world the light and the love of God. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.68)

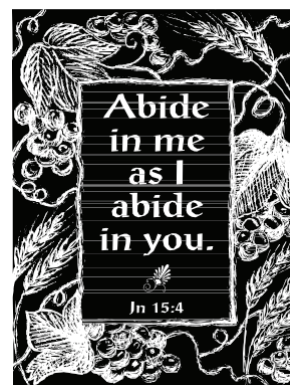
Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you seen Vincentians reflecting the love and light of Christ into this dark world?

Closing Prayer:

Lord we pray for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,
-Grant us the grace to reflect the light and love of God.

Lord we pray for all Vincentians in the world,
-Grant us the grace to be kind and loving. Amen



THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 29, 2022

Gospel: (Mark 16:15-20)

He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Reflection:

Jesus expects his disciples to walk in his footsteps. But Jesus always *invites* us to share in his ministry, never forces us. At the Ascension, Jesus *commissioned his disciples* to proclaim the gospel. At first this might seem an impossible commission: how can we expect to fill Jesus' footsteps? On our own authority we cannot preach the gospel, *we can* fill Jesus' footsteps only when we hear "the instructions given through the Spirit." What an awesome honor it is to be disciples of Christ – by returning to his rightful place at the hand of God, Jesus *entrusts* his mission to us. (Living Liturgy, p.136)

Vincentian Meditation:

The motto of the Society states that: "**No work of charity is foreign to the Society.**" And so in the Manual we read: Accordingly, the possibilities for Vincentian action are almost without limit. Being poor does not always, or necessarily, consist of being short of material goods. Being poor can also mean being physically and mentally handicapped, sick, crippled, old, ugly, or illiterate. There are poor who are or are made to feel alone...immigrants, transients, orphans, the abandoned or rejected, and all those who find themselves among others who are indifferent or hostile. Being poor may mean wanting to cry when others are laughing; being physically or morally chained, as prisoners, shut-ins, alcoholics, drug addicts; being defenseless against attacks, insults or accusations; being an innocent victim of crime or quarrels. The more the Society grows, the more it will reach the lonely and troubled who have need for care and friendship.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How are we being called to carry the mission of Jesus in new ways, meeting new needs or creating new works of charity?

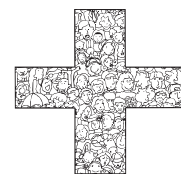
Closing Prayer:

Jesus is ever present with God, and ever present with us, and so we pray,

-Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth.

We ask for strength to continue as your faithful disciples,

-may we be aware of the poorest among us and seek to assist them. Amen.



Go into all the world and proclaim
the good news!

Mk 16:15

PENTECOST June 5, 2022

Gospel: (John 20:19-23)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Reflection:

Jesus tells us that he is sending the Spirit to us. The Spirit is the Word speaking to us in a most profound way because he dwells with us and guides us to all truth. This Spirit is all we need, provided we allow the Spirit to speak through us and not turn God's word into *our* word. Openness to the Spirit within is our guarantee that what we speak as disciples is spoken in Jesus' name. This Pentecost commemoration isn't simply recalling a past event but celebrating what God is doing with us now. In baptism each of us received the Spirit; that was our Pentecost. The Spirit dwells within us so we can be faithful and true disciples. The indwelling of the Spirit is a continual Pentecost! (Living Liturgy, p.144)

Vincenian Meditation:

While at times one can hear the Spirit speak even in a noisy crowd, it is often only in silence that one hears the deepest voice, that one plumbs the depth of meaning. It is only when what is heard is pondered, that its full meaning is revealed. The quest for truth, therefore, involves prayerfulness and reflectiveness. Jesus turned to his Father again and again in prayer to listen to him and to seek his will. Prayer is then surely one of the privileged ways of listening. But it must always be validated by life. One who listens to "what the Spirit is telling me" in prayer, but who pays little heed to what others are saying in daily life is surely suspect. Prayer must be in contact with people and events, since God speaks not only in the silence of our hearts, but also (and often first of all) in the people around us. (Maloney, *The Way of Vincent de Paul*, p.24)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you listened to the Holy Spirit through people and events?

Closing Prayer:

Seeking the grace of the Holy Spirit, we pray,

-Come, Holy Spirit.

That the winds of Pentecost may move us to deeds of peace and justice

-Come, Holy Spirit.

That the fire of Pentecost may breathe new hope into the hopeless,

-Come, Holy Spirit.

That we may listen in the silence of our heart to people and events

-Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

June 12, 2022

Gospel: (John 16:12-15)

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

Reflection:

St. Vincent de Paul urged his followers to worship and to imitate the Trinity, and to live a life in which all are one, as Jesus is one with the Father and the Spirit. He wanted his followers to have in themselves the image of the Trinity, to share a sacred relation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. St. Vincent wanted us to be together as having but one heart and soul so that through this union of spirit we would be a true image of the unity of God. He prayed to the Holy Spirit, who is the union of the Father and Son, that he would likewise be ours, giving profound peace in the midst of contradictions and difficulties. (Maloney, *The Way of Vincent de Paul*, p.34)

Vincentian Meditation:

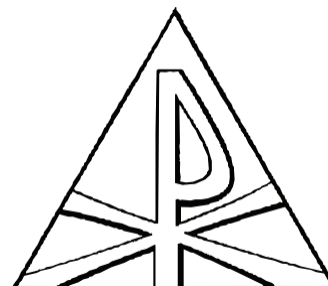
In the Rule of the Society we read: Conferences meet regularly and frequently, as a celebration of mutual friendship and out of a passion to serve the Lord. Unlike other organizations within and without the Church, the Conference meets less to conduct business than *to celebrate and deepen its unity* for essentially spiritual reasons. It is in the Conference meetings that members can experience Christ's presence in each other and the workings of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, these gatherings become a living, vivid witness of God's healing presence among us. These *unity-building* occasions constitute opportunities for personal renewal and for rededication to service of the needy and suffering.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Do we model the unity of the Trinity, “being of one mind and one heart,” in our Conferences?

Closing Prayer:

O Holy Trinity, truly you are a God of Unity,
-give us one heart and one soul.
Truly you are a God of mystery,
-give us hearts filled with reverence for You.
Truly you are a God of majesty,
-give us hearts filled with humility and love.
Truly you are a God of creative power,
-give us hearts filled with gratitude. Amen.



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

June 19, 2022

Gospel: (Luke9:11b-17)

He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Reflection:

Jesus' identity as the suffering servant who obtained redemption for us "with his own blood" is truly the same as his mission – to give of himself without counting the cost, even if its cost is his very body and blood. Self-giving unites identity and mission into the same reality. This solemnity brings us once again to Jesus' self-giving on the cross and to continue self-giving in the Eucharist, and challenges us to take up Jesus' mission of self-giving. The Eucharist is the centerpiece of our lives, challenging us: our identity is our mission – self-giving.

Vincenian Meditation:

The Rule of the Society states: The Eucharist plays a major role in Vincenian spirituality. This is seen in the lives of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic. Vincent spent one hour each morning before the Blessed Sacrament before celebrating Mass. He would frequently make short visits to the chapel before leaving and upon returning from his responsibilities. Frederic attended Mass daily whenever possible. And a day did not go by, when Frederic would make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament in one of the churches in Paris as he made his way to an appointment. Both Vincent and Frederic discovered what the Church teaches today: the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life; it augmented their union with Jesus, strengthened their charity and committed them to the poor.

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How can you make the Eucharist play a prominent place in your life, as it did in Frederic and Vincent's?

Closing Prayer:

Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a sign of love,
-may the poor and outcasts find a place at your table.

Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a sign of unity,
-may we embrace diversity with reverence and open hearts.

Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a bond of charity,
-may you welcome home all who have died believing in you. Amen.



FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

June 24, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 15:3-7)

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Reflection:

The Litany of the Sacred Heart contains language that reminds us of the real demand of discipleship: "Heart of Jesus, abode of justice and love...of Whose fullness we have all received...patient and most merciful...obedient unto death...our life and resurrection." We have received fullness of life from God through the death and resurrection of Jesus; now we must be abodes of justice and love, patient and merciful, obedient even unto death. Although this solemnity speaks of God's great tenderness in loving us, even this has its demand. It is God's tenderness that encourages us to have our own hearts pierced so that others might receive the fullness of life through us. We can do this because God loved us first. (Living Liturgy, p.160)

Vincenian Meditation:

What is the Vincenian call about? It's about three basic questions:

- Do we see the face of Christ in everyone we serve?
- Were we the good news of Jesus Christ to each person served?
- Most importantly, did every person that we served see Jesus in each of us?

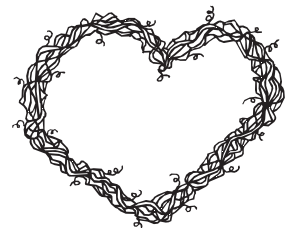
This is what our Vincenian call is all about. It is what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is all about. It is what Vincenian spirituality is all about.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How does devotion to the Sacred Heart help us to live out our Vincenian call?

Closing Prayer

- Sacred Heart of Jesus,
-give us the grace to be compassionate servants of the poor.
- Sacred Heart of Jesus,
-give us the grace to be abodes of justice and love.
- Sacred Heart of Jesus,
-give us the grace to be patient and merciful. Amen



FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

June 25, 2022

Gospel: (Lk 1:57-66, 80)

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking the father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

Reflection:

The birth of John the Baptist on June 25 comes three months after the celebration on March 25 of the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel told Our Lady that her cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, and six months before the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus. The purpose of these Feasts is not to celebrate the exact dates of these events, but simply to commemorate them in an interlinking way. Celebrating the birth of John the Baptist is a feast that is relevant to all of us today. When Mary the mother of Jesus journeyed to visit Elizabeth, the baby "leapt" in Elizabeth's womb at the greeting of Mary. Just like John, we would do well to "leap" with joy in announcing Jesus to all those we encounter in our world. We can do this in everything we do—not just by words, but by actions which proclaim our Lord to others.

Vincenzian Meditation:

If we are to rejoice in the grace of God—and the grace of God is given to us in order to "leap for joy"—we must have eyes that see and ears that hear. That in turn demands a reflecting heart...to have a capacity for wonder. But there can be no wonder in our lives without silence. We are called to the service of the poor, but our service must come from a heart that knows how to marvel at the grace of God, without which we can do nothing. To dig continually a well of silence in our lives is to have assurance that God's grace will keep springing up, especially when we need it to help the needy who thirst for God's grace and kindness, and seek it from our hands and lips and hearts. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 55-56)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In your service to the poor, when have you marveled at the grace of God?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, give us the grace to "leap for joy" like John the Baptist

as we announce you to all those we serve.

To all those who thirst for your grace and kindness,

may they find it in our hands, our lips and our hearts.

Amen



THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 26, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 9:57-62)

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Reflection:

Just as Jairus overcame his fears in order to encounter Jesus and receive life, so we must surrender our own wills in order to encounter Jesus and receive life. Living the paschal mystery is none other than our daily dying to self—overcoming our fears and reaching out to Jesus in humility—in all the little, practical ways that fill our daily routines. Paschal mystery dying is as simple as smiling at the children even when we're bone tired or taking an hour out of our day to visit the sick. When we surrender in humility to his goodness and power, Jesus offers us life and in this we encounter the Lord of life. (Living Liturgy, p.164)

Vincentian Meditation:

If St. Vincent de Paul was able to do so much for the poor of his day, it was because with his mind and heart he had come to know something of the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of God that is in the heart of Jesus. As children of God, we must constantly be convincing ourselves in prayer of the excessive love with which God has reached out and is still reaching out to us each day and each moment of the day. If we are not convinced that God loves us as we are, even with our frailties, it will be very difficult for us to show the love of God to the poor. It is the work of humble prayer to come to know oneself as a person who is loved by God. It is the work of humble prayer to share that experience with the poor and to convince them that God cares for them. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p292)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you come to know that you are loved by God?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, give us the humility to know that you love us,

-and to trust that you will answer our prayers.

Jesus, give us the grace to share our faith in you with the poor,

-and to convince them that you care for them. Amen



LITURGICAL YEAR-Cycle C
Third Quarter-2022

JULY

| | | |
|------|----|-------------------------------------|
| July | 3 | Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| July | 10 | Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| July | 17 | Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| July | 24 | Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| July | 31 | Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |

AUGUST

| | | |
|--------|----|---------------------------------------|
| August | 7 | Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| August | 14 | Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| August | 15 | <i>Feast of the Assumption</i> |
| August | 21 | Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| August | 28 | Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time |

SEPTEMBER

| | | |
|-----------|----|---|
| September | 4 | Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| September | 8 | <i>Feast of the Nativity of Mary</i> |
| September | 9 | <i>Feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam</i> |
| September | 11 | Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| September | 18 | Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| September | 25 | Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| September | 27 | <i>Feast of St. Vincent de Paul</i> |

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME July 3, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 10:1-12,17-20)

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Reflection:

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' The challenge of this gospel is to look beyond our own knowledge of others preconditioned by what we think we know about them and listen to them, allow them to teach us about God and how to be faith-filled disciples. God does not very often visit us in the unusual and spectacular, hitting us over the head so that we don't miss God's message of salvation. Most often God visits us in the ordinary circumstances of our own lives through ordinary people we meet who are faithful as Jesus was to their own mission to make known the gospel. It is too easy to dismiss the events of this gospel reading as past history. After all, we like to think, if we had been there and seen those mighty deeds, we would have believed. Really?

Vincentian Meditation:

Had we but eyes of faith, we would see that each day we are being surprised by joy. We have come to take so much that is good in life for granted. Is not your call to serve the poor a surprise, seeing that so many others are so imprisoned in themselves that their hearts remain untouched by the sufferings of the poor whom you are serving? Your unselfish service of the poor is for the poor themselves a surprise. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 378)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How has God visited you in the ordinary circumstances of your life?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, give us the grace to find you in the ordinary circumstances of life,

-as we learn to trust in you.

Teach us to find all the ways that you surprise us by joy,

-as we learn to have faith in you.

Teach us to be grateful for being called to serve the poor,

-as we learn to love unselfishly with you. Amen



FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 10, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 10:25-37)

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Reflection:

Jesus calls us to be like the Samaritan, who was from a different group than the Jews that He was calling to be His disciples. Like Jesus, disciples will meet resistance, but they will also meet success when they encounter those with faith. It is an awesome thought that Jesus entrusts his mission to us. With our own power and talent, we can do little; with the authority with which Jesus invests his disciples we can do much.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In your home visits, how have you felt like the good Samaritan —being sent to carry the mission of Jesus to the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, as we go together on home visits,
-walk with us.

Teach us to do what is right and just,
-and to speak the truth with courage.

Teach us to embrace the stranger,
-and to recognize the face of Christ.

Teach us to serve the poor with love,
-and to treasure each other in our Conference. Amen



SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 17, 2022

Gospel: (Mark 6:30-34)

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Reflection:

Last Sunday Jesus sent his apostles on mission to be like the Good Samaritan; this Sunday they face the harsh reality that the mission will wear them out. The exhaustion can come from the good work and the "great numbers" of people who need help. The needs are great, and it can be exhausting to try to meet them. Whatever the cause of being worn out, Jesus is there to listen, support, and invite us to rest a bit. If we let Jesus gather us in, he will take care of us. We all need to go off to a "deserted place" occasionally to "rest awhile." Whether this means taking some time alone each day to pray and rest in God, making Sunday truly a day of rest, or setting aside a few days a year to make a retreat, all of us need time to regain our strength so we can take up our own shepherding tasks. If the mission overwhelms us we will be unable to persevere. Living faithful to the mission Jesus has given us requires that we balance action and contemplation.

Vincentian Meditation:

Vincent de Paul, a great man of action was also a contemplative, caught up in God and consumed by his love. His contemplation of God's love overflowed into practical love for the poor. He encourages his followers: "Let us all give ourselves completely to the practice of prayer, since it is by it that all good things come to us. If we persevere, it is thanks to prayer. If we succeed in our employments, it is thanks to prayer. If we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to prayer. If we remain in charity and if we are saved, all that happens is thanks to God and thanks to prayer. Just as God refuses nothing to prayer, so also He grants almost nothing without prayer." (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p. 98)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

As a Vincentian, how can you become more like a "contemplative in action?"

Closing Prayer:

Lord, give us the grace to become "contemplatives in action"

-Let our prayer rise before you.

For all those whom we have served this week,

-Let our prayer rise before you.

For all those who labor for unjust wages,

-Let our prayer rise before you.

For all those who have no work,

-Let our prayer rise before you. Amen



**Come
to me
and I
will
give
you
rest.**

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 24, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 11:1-13)

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Reflection:

This beautiful part of Luke's Gospel is Christ teaching the disciples and us how to pray. When God Himself prays, this is His own prayer. How do we live up to His calling to forgive those around us, just as He forgives us.

Vincentian Meditation:

Our love of God and the love of the neighbor are one and the same love. It is our love in response to God's love for us. Since the loving God cannot be seen but must be experienced through loving people, it follows that one who sees others without loving cannot love or even know God. For Vincent and Frederic, as for Jesus, love is neither sentiment, nor affection, nor theory, but a practical willing of another's best interests and a consequent striving to advance those interests. Vincentians are about loving. Love is a verb, not a noun. Vincentians are concerned with the practice and exercise of the virtue of charity...loving God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (US Manual, P.26)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Who are the "loving people" in your life in whom you have experienced the love of God?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, draw our hearts away from selfishness,
- turn our lives to loving service.

Lord, may we bring the bread of hope to the poor,
-teach us to serve you in those who suffer.

Lord, may we come to know the abundance of your love,
-give us compassionate hearts. Amen



EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
31 July, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 12:13-21)

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Reflection:

If Jesus is the bread from heaven given for us and we are the body of Christ, then we must conclude that we ourselves are to be bread from heaven that fosters eternal life for others. Jesus gives himself as bread from heaven. We give ourselves to others, as bread from heaven, when we confirm our belief by means of the everyday actions we do. Treating another as the body of Christ is believing. Taking time to be in touch with our spiritual needs is believing. Reaching out in compassion to others is believing. Self-giving is believing. (Living Liturgy, p.182)

Vincentian Meditation:

In your ministry, as St. Vincent says, first do and then teach. As a follower of Christ, a servant of the poor, you will touch the hearts of God's people especially when you give vibrant witness.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

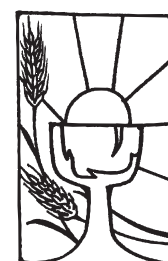
How do we give ourselves to others as bread from heaven ...in works, words and relationships?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, set our hearts on fire with compassion for the poor,
-so that we may witness to your love through our works.

Lord, fill us with your love and forgiveness,
-so that we may give ourselves to others as bread from heaven.

Lord, give us the grace to create communities of faith,
-so that we may *be with* and *work with* those who are poor.
Amen



*Whoever
comes to me
will never
be hungry.*

Jn 6:35

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 7, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 12:32-38)

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.

Reflection:

What does Christ mean when He tells us to be “dressed and ready for service”? How do we go about getting ready for our Vincentian work? How do we learn to be ready to love those around us and those we are here to serve?

Vincentian Meditation:

Nothing will nourish us more than focusing on God’s love, of which the cross is the symbol. The love that Jesus reveals through the symbol of the cross is: self-giving, sacrificial, forgiving, healing, unifying, loyal to one’s friends, powerless, in solidarity with the weak, confident in the power of God. As Vincentians, frequent meditation on the cross, as the symbol of God’s love for us and of our love of God, has abiding importance. Jesus’ dying love gives meaning to the many “crosses” his followers are called to bear. The following of the crucified Lord is the supreme act of faith; it is a surrender in hope and love into the incomprehensible mystery of God. (Maloney, He Hears the Cry of the Poor, p. 45-46)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways have you found that indeed, the cross leads to resurrection!

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, through your cross and resurrection,

-fill us with your peace!

For the grace to eat the bread of life and the bread of suffering,

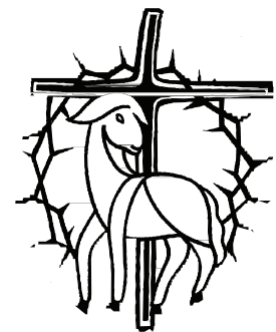
-fill us with your strength!

For the grace to accept the crosses in our lives,

-fill us with your love!

For the grace to be witnesses to your resurrection,

-fill us with your joy! Amen



ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

August 14, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 1:39-56)

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Reflection:

Mary's "yes" unleashed a unique relationship with Jesus. This is why all generations will call her blessed: without knowing how and why, she believed that God would raise her up to be the Mother of God. For nine months she would nurture in her womb the Life that would bring life to all. For nine months she would give her body so that the Bread of Life might be born. Mary is blessed because she believed in God's word. Mary is blessed because her body gave life to the Word incarnate. This is why we believe that her body is assumed into heaven: hers was a blessed body. Body and soul, she was assumed into heaven to enjoy eternal life with the divine Word, her Son. And, this because she believed and trusted in God! (Living Liturgy, p.190)

Vincentian Meditation:

Mary is the ideal disciple, the model listener. She hears God's word and acts on it. Mary, as the Listening Disciple, lies at the core of New Testament spirituality: all disciples, like Mary, are called to listen to the word of God attentively and act on it. There is almost nothing more important that Mary can teach us than to learn to listen. At root, being a disciple means being a hearer of the word. The whole of Christian life can be summed up in the phrase: "She listened to the word of God and acted on it." (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p.110-111)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How can we better live our Vincentian devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Mary responded with joyful faith to your call,

-Lord, open our hearts to do your will.

Mary listened to the Word of God and acted on it,

-Lord, grant us the grace to follow her example.

Mary assumed into heaven, you are the Mother of the Church

-Mary, full of grace, pray for us. Amen



TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 21, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 13:22-30)

Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

Reflection:

Believing in Jesus and his teaching requires letting go of what we think we know of God and allowing God to act in a whole new way. Israel's expectations of who the Messiah would be blocked the way for some to see God acting in a new way and offering a whole new way of relating to us. Liturgy invites us to constantly assess the depth of our belief-commitment. We judge our belief not on what we say or think but on what we do. Self-giving always leads to new life and this is why we are able to make the choice to stay with the Master, for we have come to know and believe that he has the words of eternal life. (Living Liturgy, p.196)

Vincentian Meditation:

In prayer, the emphasis must always be on the presence of the personal God, to whose word we must listen attentively, as he speaks to us the good news of his love for us and for others. In an era when there is much noise, where the media, if we so choose, speak to us all day long, we must ask ourselves: Are we able to distinguish the voice of God among the many voices that are speaking? Is God's word able to say "new things" to us? Are we still capable of wonder? The word "wonder" has a kinship with the word wound.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How is the Holy Spirit calling us to change- to become "new"?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus is ever present with God, and ever present with us, and so we pray,

-Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

We ask for strength to continue as your faithful disciples,

-and may we always let your word break into our consciousness and change us. Amen.



TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 28, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 14: 7-14)

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honoured in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Reflection:

What does Christ mean when He tells us not to invite our friends and rich neighbours? In our Vincentian work, He calls to be friends to those who are marginalised and can never repay us for our efforts.

Vincentian Meditation:

For St. Vincent, simplicity consisted in referring things to God alone, or purity of intention. In this sense simplicity is doing everything for love of God and for no other end. It entails avoiding "human respect" or doing things merely to look good in the eyes of others. Simplicity is speaking the truth. It is saying things as they are, without concealing or hiding anything. The heart must not think one thing while the mouth says another. Vincentians must avoid all duplicity, dissimulation, cunning, and double meaning. (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p.144-145)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How do we live our core value of Simplicity in the spirit of St. Vincent?

Closing Prayer:

Through Christ, the merciful Servant,

-give us interior righteousness and a heart turned to God.

Through Christ, the Healer,

-give us the grace to always speak the truth.

Through Christ, the Holy One,

-give us the grace to avoid all duplicity, cunning and double meaning. Amen.



TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
September 4, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 14:25-33)

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Reflection:

In living the gospel, rather than simply bringing others to Jesus *we ourselves* are the presence of the risen Christ who bring healing and salvation. If we are to be the embodiment of God’s saving power then we must open our ears to hear and recognize all the everyday opportunities for making God’s presence and reign known. This might be something so simple as turning off the TV and spending some time in the family listening to each other. Or it might be something so demanding as choosing to work fewer hours, and have less money available, in order to be more present to others. However we respond to other’s needs, it is helpful to remember that we do embody God’s offer of salvation through the good we do. (Living Liturgy, p.206)

Vincentian Meditation:

St. Vincent tells us that humility is a grace of our Lord Jesus. Humility only comes when the light of Jesus penetrates deeply into our being and into all our thinking and reflection. When that light does penetrate into us, it transfigures everything, not only our opinion about ourselves but our attitude towards others. With humility God will be glorified, the poor will be served and made happy, and we ourselves will enjoy the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, who is gentle and humble of heart. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.586)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you brought healing and have been the “presence of Christ” to others?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, as you opened the ears of the deaf man,

-open our ears to hear the cries of the poor.

Jesus, as you removed the speech impediment of the deaf man.

-give us the grace to speak of your love to others.

Jesus, let your light penetrate into us,

-transfiguring our opinion about ourselves and our attitude towards others. Amen



FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF MARY **September 8**

Gospel: (Matthew 1: 18-32)

Suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and said: “Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.” All this happened to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel.”

Reflection:

Frederic Ozanam died on the feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 8, 1853. It seems fitting for this man to die on the feast of a woman to whom he had been greatly devoted all his life. Devotion to Mary, the mother of God, was part of Frederic Ozanam’s life from childhood to death. He sought her intercession often. Kneeling at her altar, he prayed, “I place my intentions under the auspices of our Divine Mother...” Frederic believed in the power of Mary, the Mother of God. He often prayed to her for himself and for others. He believed in the power of Mary’s intercession with her divine offspring. Devotion to her was woven into the various stages of Frederic’s life and especially prominent in the poetic devotion of youth, the moral challenges of young adulthood, the transformation of becoming a parent, and the acceptance of suffering and death. Frederic invites us to consider our own devotion to Mary and our trust in her intercession. (Ramson, *Praying with Frederic*, p.68, 71)

Vincentian Meditation:

“I am entirely yours, most Holy Virgin, that I may more perfectly belong to God. Teach me, therefore, to imitate your holy life by fulfilling the designs of God in my life. I very humbly beg you to assist me.”-St. Louise de Marillac- (Gibson and Kneaves, *Praying with Louise*, p. 91)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Have you ever felt the power of Mary, the mother of God, in your life? Do you need to ask her intercession for a significant situation now?

Closing Prayer:

O God, as we celebrate the birth of Mary,
 -we ask for the grace to trust in her intercession.
Through Mary, source of our joy,
 -we ask for the grace of healing the brokenhearted.
Through Mary, seat of wisdom,
 -we ask for the grace of guidance in our lives.
Through Mary, mother of God,
 -we ask for the grace to recognize Jesus in the poor.
Amen



FEAST OF BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM *September 9*

Gospel: (Luke 10: 25-37)

“And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied: “There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell in with robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and then went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road; he saw him but continued on. Likewise there was a Levite who came the same way; he saw him and went on. But a Samaritan who was journeying along came on him and was moved to pity at the sight. He approached him and dressed his wounds, pouring in oil and wine as a means to heal. He then hoisted him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, where he cared for him. The next day he took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request: “Look after him, and if there is any further expense I will repay you on my way back.” Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?” The answer came, “The one who treated him with compassion.” Jesus said to him, “Then go and do the same.”

Reflection:

Frederic heard the call of Jesus –to be merciful. He saw the works of mercy as calls to action. He believed that if he genuinely wanted to serve the poor and others, he had to direct his works of mercy to the moral and spiritual betterment of individuals, not only to the alleviation of their physical distress.

Vincenzian Meditation:

At Frederic Ozanam’s beatification ceremonies, August 22, 1997, Pope John Paul II told the world: “Frederic observed the real situation of the poor and sought to be more and more effective in helping them in their human development. He understood that charity must lead to efforts of justice...that charity and justice go together. Frederic had the clear-sighted courage to seek a front-line social and political commitment in a troubled time in the life of his country.” (Memorial of the Beatification of Frederic Ozanam, p.82)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How are you living the spirit of Frederic in “justice and charity”?

Closing Prayer: A Litany in Honor of Blessed Frederic Ozanam

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Frederic Ozanam, defender of faith, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, exemplary husband and father, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, lover of poverty and the poor, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, advocate of the dignity of the human person, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, servant of the truth, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, model for Catholic teachers, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, disciple of St. Vincent De Paul, | pray for us. |
| Frederic Ozanam, faithful son of the Church, | pray for us. |

Amen



TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
September 11, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 15:1-32)

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Reflection:

Christ's key message was to love those who are outside our own experience and are marginalised, just like the tax collectors of His time. How do we go about our Vincentian work loving those who we come across who are most in need?

Vincentian Meditation:

The cross is always seen in light of the resurrection. Without the resurrection, the cross remains in darkness. Also, there is no resurrection without the cross. The cross of Christ, therefore, stands with the resurrection at the center of the good news we believe in. Together, they tell us how deeply God loves us. They evangelize us. And, besides the cross of Jesus, the crosses of his members can evangelize us, too. Our lives can be transformed by the suffering love of Jesus' followers, who fill up his sufferings in their bodies: the sick, who bear illness with courage; the grieving, who hope against hope; the dying, who clearly trust in the resurrection. The "foolishness" of the cross will be credible on our lips only if we have learned its "wisdom" from sharing in the suffering of our brothers and sisters. (Maloney, He Hears the Cry of the Poor, p. 48-49)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you been evangelized by others who bear their cross in faith and hope?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you became obedient even unto death, death on the cross,
-may we help to carry the burdens of others.
Jesus, you carried your cross with faith and trust,
-may we patiently endure our own times of suffering.
Amen.



TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
September 18, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 16:1-13)

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' "Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.' "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' "A thousand bushels[b] of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Reflection:

How do we use our wealth to help build the kingdom of God in our Vincentian work?

Vincentian Meditation:

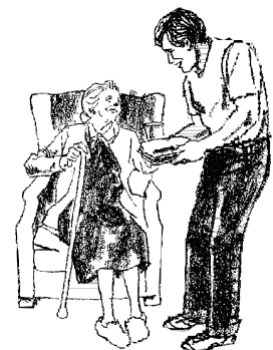
Are we really able to hear the cries of the poor, of the most oppressed: the women and children, who are often the poorest members of society; those discriminated against because of race, color, nationality, religion; the AIDS victims, who are often shunned by their families and by the physically healthy, those on the "edges of life," the helpless infants and the helpless aged, who are unable to speak up themselves? Are we alert, "listening," to the "signs of the times": the increasing gap between the rich and the poor and the repeated call for justice made by the Church? (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p. 25-26)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways are you challenged to be a "servant of all" by receiving the "least of all"...whose cries are the hardest to hear?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, set our hearts on fire with compassion for the "least of all,"
-so that we may suffer with those who suffer.
Lord, give us the grace to hear the cries of the poor,
-so that we may be a servant of the most oppressed.
Lord, help us to listen to the "signs of the times,"
-so that we may respond to the call for justice in our world. Amen



TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
September 25, 2022

Gospel: (Mark 9: 38-48)

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our company." Jesus said in reply: "Do not try to stop him. No man who performs a miracle using my name can at once speak ill of me. Anyone who is not against us is with us. Anyone who gives you a drink of water because you belong to Christ will not, I assure you, go without his reward. But it would be better if anyone who leads astray one of these simple believers were to be plunged in the sea with a great millstone fastened around his neck."

Reflection:

We often have strict, legitimate criteria for who can belong or not. In this gospel the apostle John is bringing to Jesus' attention that someone who "doesn't belong" was doing what Jesus did. Jesus lays down a simple, clear rule: anyone who is doing good in Jesus' name cannot also speak ill of Jesus. Jesus has a simple rule for who belongs in his company—"whoever is not against us is for us." This is a contrast between generous leadership and petty discipleship. Jealousy and pettiness thwart the advancement of God's kingdom and they must be cut out. Jesus keeps us focused on what is essential: God's kingdom. (Living Liturgy, p.218)

Vincentian Meditation:

It is difficult to see Christ in the poor. Sometimes, it is even more difficult to see him in someone in our own Conference. Our Lord keeps saying to us: If you find it difficult to see Christ in the poor or in the person who annoys you in your own Conference, begin by trying to be Christ to such people: to say nothing, to do nothing which Christ would not say or do. That calls for faith. Let us not be discouraged at our failures in our service of the poor or by our failures in fraternal charity. With the grace of Jesus Christ we must keep trying. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 444)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Does "jealousy and pettiness" exist in our Conference...how can we change?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to be true Vincentians, we pray:

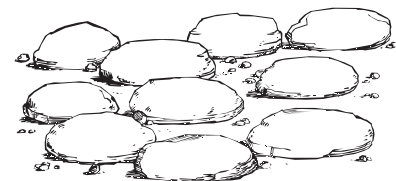
-Lord, help us to find you in the poor and in each other.

For the grace to be open and honest with each other,

-Lord, heal our jealousy and pettiness.

For the grace to let go of our prejudice and judgmental attitudes, MK 9:40

-Lord, teach us how to forgive each other. Amen



**WHOEVER IS NOT AGAINST
US IS FOR US.**

MK 9:40

FEAST OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL *September 27*

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-9

When Jesus saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside...his disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them: *“How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs. Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled. Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land. Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill. Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs. Blest are the single-hearted, for they shall see God. Blest too the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God...”*

Reflection:

For Vincent, love is always very concrete, very practical. It is love in practice. “Let us love God, my brothers and sisters,” he urges, “let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows.” We are called to follow Christ as servants of the poor. Servants get their hands dirty. They labor long and hard. They engage in difficult tasks, visiting the sick and elderly in their homes, feeding street-people, serving the hungry, helping the widow and orphan. They are on the front lines ministering to the poor. As St. Vincent says, we must first do and then teach.

Vincentian Meditation:

St. Vincent tells us that “Love is inventive to the point of infinity.” I encourage you today to be very inventive. Because you are on the front line in laboring for the poor, you will be among the first to know their real needs. It will not be psychologists or economists, who study the needs of the poor by examining the data they receive. You will know ahead of them because the poor will tell you directly. Be inventive in meeting those needs. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p.133-4)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

In what ways can you become “inventive to infinity” in serving the needs of the poor that come to you?

Closing Prayer:

- O God, your son Jesus preached the Good News to the poor,
-may we continue to be effective instruments of Christ to those most in need.
- O God, give us the strength and creativity we need to stand in solidarity with those who suffer,
-may our hearts be filled with compassion and love.
- O God, you call us to be followers of St. Vincent de Paul,
-grant us the grace to be “inventive to infinity” in serving the poor and suffering! Amen



LITURGICAL YEAR-Cycle C Fourth Quarter - 2022

OCTOBER

| | | |
|---------|----|--|
| October | 2 | Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| October | 9 | Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| October | 16 | Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| October | 23 | Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| October | 30 | Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time |

NOVEMBER

| | | |
|----------|----|---|
| November | 1 | <i>All Saints Day</i> |
| November | 2 | <i>All Souls Day</i> |
| November | 6 | Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| November | 13 | Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| November | 20 | Feast of Christ the King |
| November | 27 | First Sunday of Advent (<i>Start of Year A</i>) |
| November | 28 | <i>St. Catherine Laboure</i> |

DECEMBER

| | | |
|----------|----|---|
| December | 4 | Second Sunday of Advent |
| December | 8 | <i>Immaculate Conception</i> |
| December | 11 | Third Sunday of Advent |
| December | 18 | Fourth Sunday of Advent |
| December | 25 | Feast of the Nativity of the Lord |
| December | 26 | Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus Mary and Joseph |

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 2, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 17:5-10)

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

Reflection:

How is the work we do the same as the mustard seed? How is each kind deed we do for the people we are here to serve increasing our faith and closeness to God?

Vincenzian Meditation:

Simplicity "is the virtue I love most." In St. Vincent's eyes, Jesus is utterly simple—like a child. He speaks the truth. He says things as they are. His intentions are pure, referring all things in life to God. To St. Vincent, simplicity meant genuineness and transparency. Vincent always knew that all good comes from God and he acknowledge his own limitedness and sinfulness. Vincent lived with an exuberant confidence in God's forgiveness and love." (Maloney, *Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent*, p. 131-132)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Has a "hardness of heart" crept into our lives of service?

Closing Prayer:

Those who walk with simplicity proclaim the steadfast love of our God. In trust, we pray,

-Lord, give us genuine and transparent hearts.

Make us open and trusting like children,

-Lord, heal our "hardness of heart."

Teach us to let go of the baggage that has developed in our lives,

-Lord, help us to live with confidence in your forgiveness.

Give us the joy and openness of a child,

-Lord, may we find you in our service to those who are poor.

Amen



TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 9, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 17:11-19)

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Reflection:

Christ's great Love for us is to heal us and those around us. Our Vincentian work is a great way to show His love for His people. How do you heal those around you in the work that you do?

Vincentian Meditation:

"Did the young man tend to rely too much on negative goodness? He had not broken the commandments, but how much good had he done for others? Was Our Lord saying to him: "With all your possessions, with all your wealth, with all that you could give away, what positive good have you done to others? Have you gone out of your way to help and comfort and strengthen others as you might have done?" Perhaps Our Lord was saying to him: "Stop looking at goodness as consisting in *not* doing things. Take yourself: take all that you have and spend yourself and your possessions on others. Then you will find true happiness in time and in eternity." (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 715)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

What "possessions"- time, money, talent-are you called to give to the poor?

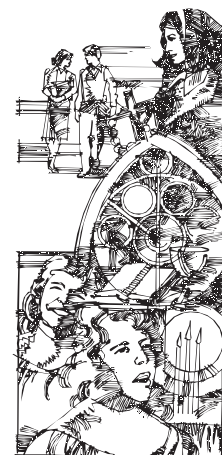
Closing Prayer:

For the grace to let go of my possessions,

-God of mercy, hear my prayer.

For the grace to have an undivided heart,

-God of mercy, hear my prayer. Amen



TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 16, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 18:1-8)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Reflection:

This Gospel is about justice and God's Love for us to go and make the world just through our works and through our faith. How do you go about making a more just and compassionate world in the Vincentian work that you do?

Vincentian Meditation:

People are not looking for leaders who can solve all their problems or answer all their questions. Often they know the answers already or they know their problem has no immediate solution. More than anything else people look to us who minister to them for our presence of loving, caring and forgiving others. They want our help in their efforts to handle pain and frustration. They look to us for understanding; they seek a sensitive and consoling response to their hurt feelings; they need the spiritual comfort we can bring through our ministry. They want someone who will pray with them, whose presence will remind them that no matter what their difficulties might be, God really loves and cares for them. They want assurance that God will never abandon them. This is the leadership that we are called to live. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 310-quoting Cardinal Bernadin)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How do we in our "servanthood" manifest the presence of a loving, caring and forgiving people? Or how do we not?

Closing Prayer:

Christ calls us to be servants to each other, and so we pray,

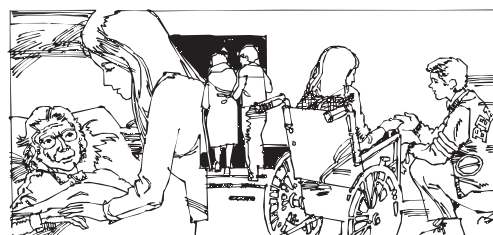
-Lord, help us to be loving, caring and forgiving.

For the grace to help others in their pain and frustration,

-Lord, help us to be understanding and sensitive.

For the grace to bring peace and healing to others,

-Lord, help us to give the "assurance to the poor that God will never abandon them." Amen



THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 23, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 18:9-14)

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Reflection:

The humility of the tax collector in this Gospel is His example to us of how we should live our Vincentian work. The relationship between the tax collector and the Pharisee, is a model for how He wants us to live our lives. How do you go about being like the humble tax collector in your Vincentian work?

Vincentian Meditation:

Our Lord wants us to persevere in prayer and not be discouraged because God seems slow in answering our prayers. Perhaps the reason we become discouraged in prayer is that we feel in a vague way that God is not taking us seriously. The truth is that it is not God who fails to take us seriously when we pray to Him, but rather we fail to take God seriously. Sometimes in our heart of hearts we pray without full confidence that He is going to give us what we ask. I wonder if God is slow in answering our prayers at times in order to perfect the confidence which He wishes us to have in Him who is our Father. Sometimes the reason of God’s delay in answering our prayers is that He wants to make us ready to accept what He desires to give us. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 142-3)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

When have you found that sometimes God seems slow in answering your prayers?

Closing Prayer:

For the sick and the poor who wait for healing,

-Lord, hear our prayer.

For the grace to persevere in prayer and trust in God,

-Lord, hear our prayer. Amen



THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
October 30, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Reflection:

"The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." This is a central theme of Christ's Love for us. Your Vincentian work is a crucial part of His Love. How are you His hands and voice in your work?

Vincentian Meditation:

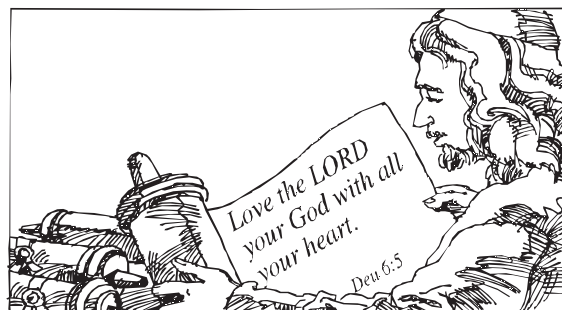
The spiritual genius of St. Vincent lies in the success he had in marrying the two great commandments of the law. The historian, Bremond, tells us: "It is not his love of mankind which led Vincent de Paul to sanctity, but it is rather that sanctity made him truly and efficaciously charitable. It is not the poor who gave him to God, but God who gave him to the poor." The dynamism, the energy, the love which St. Vincent manifested to the poor did not come from any doctrinaire views on politics or sociology. The source of his energy and the clarity of his spiritual vision came from his contemplation of the words and actions of Jesus Christ in the pages of the Gospel and from his daily contact with Jesus Christ in the quietness of prayer. He became convinced that, once men and women are made new through their personal dedication to Jesus Christ, a new world will follow. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 4688)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you found the truth that "It is not the poor who give us to God, but God who gives us to the poor."

Closing Prayer:

O Lord, teach us how to love God with all our soul,
with all our mind, and with all our strength,
-and our neighbor as ourselves. Amen



FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

November 1

Gospel: (Matthew 5:1-9)

Jesus went up the mountain, and he began to teach them saying, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”*

Reflection:

This solemnity of All Saints is a reminder and promise that through our baptism we already share in the glory of the saints whom we honor. The saints stand out as models who have been faithful to their baptismal commitment and give us courage and strength that we, too, can be faithful. We know some of the saints who have been canonized by name. And there are also countless other saints, our deceased relatives and friends among them, whom we also know by name. This multitude of faithful followers of Christ beckons us to hear what Jesus teaches in the gospel: “Blessed are you...” (Living Liturgy, p.240)

Vincenian Meditation:

The Beatitudes are a new scale of values. We might say that the Beatitudes are an invasion of God’s madness into the world of what humanity considers to be good sense. Have you ever tried to make a list of what you would consider your eight beatitudes? This could be very revealing and might show a very deep chasm between the values of our Lord and those by which we daily live. Do you feel comfortable with our Lord’s Beatitudes? Or has it been your experience, as it has been mine, that when you start to think or talk about one beatitude, you prefer to drop it because of its difficulty, and move on to another which you would consider more simple and easy? The beatitude that makes you feel most uncomfortable is probably the one that is most relevant to you personally. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.739)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Who is your favorite “Saint” canonized formally or informally?

Closing Prayer:

May we work together to build up the kingdom of God,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

May our desire for God draw us more deeply into prayer,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

May we comfort the broken hearted in their sorrow,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

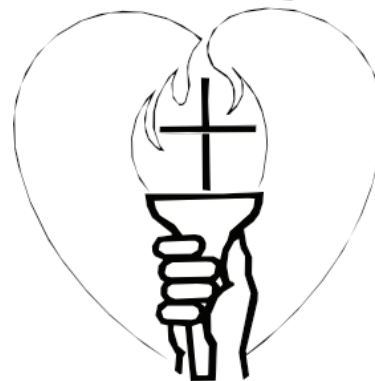
May we feed the hungry and bring mercy to the poor,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

May we be peacemakers,

-Saints of God, intercede for us. Amen

*Take hold of
the eternal life.*



COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

November 2

Gospel: (John 6: 37-40)

Jesus said to the crowds: "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day."

Reflection:

This feast day reminds us that God is faithful to God's promise to save and that the victory of salvation is possible for all. We begin our lives by belonging to the Father who wills that not one of us be lost. God's will that we gain everlasting life is so strong that God sent his only-begotten Son to unite with us in our weak humanity so that we can be raised to a share in divine life. But temptations abound; we make choices selfishly to serve ourselves rather than gracefully serve others and God. Truly, there is a choice to be made and the choice to live in grace is a constant one. Each choice we make, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant, truly does take us either closer to God and each other or farther away. The gospel invites us to think of our everyday choices as having consequences—eternal life. (Living Liturgy, p.238)

Vincentian Meditation:

Frederic wrote: "I commit my soul to Jesus Christ, my Saviour...I die in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. I've known the misgivings of the present age, but all my life has convinced me that there is no rest for the mind and the heart except in the faith of the Church and under her authority...I implore the prayers of all my friends of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, let not your zeal be slackened by those who say, 'he is in heaven.' Pray unceasingly for one who loved you all much, but who has sinned much. Aided by your supplications, dear kind friends, I shall leave this world with less fear. I firmly trust that we shall not be separated and that I shall remain in the midst of you until you rejoin me. May the blessing of God, the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit rest upon you all. Amen" (Derum, *Apostle in a Top Hat*, p 265)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How do we continue to share the stories of and pray for the deceased members of the Society?

Closing Prayer:

Let us remember the members of our Conference who have died,

-may they celebrate now in the feast of heaven.

Let us remember all the poor who have gone before us,

-may they receive the wine of peace and the bread of life.

Amen



All will
be made
alive in
Christ

1 Cor 15:22

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

November 6, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 20:27-38)

Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive."

Reflection:

"For to Him, all are alive". What does this part of the Gospel tell us? How are you alive in the work that you do? How does the work you do as part of the Society bring Christ's life to those around you?

Vincenian Meditation:

In the movie *Monsieur Vincent*, there is a scene where Queen Anne of Austria, is talking to Vincent towards the end of his life. She is listing some of his great achievements. He listens pensively and then mutters: "I have done nothing." She continues to catalogue the works he has initiated and again Vincent mutters: "I have done nothing." The Queen becomes a little impatient with him and says: "Monsieur Vincent, if you say you have done nothing, what must we do if we are to save our souls?" Monsieur Vincent slowly raises his head and with his piercing black eyes looks at the Queen and utters one word:

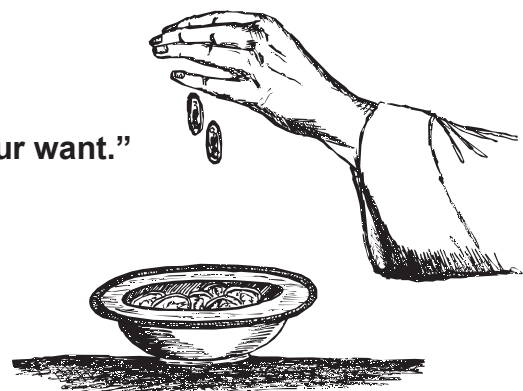
"More." (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.467)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

What "More" can we do?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, our guide,
-give us the generosity to give "from our want."
Jesus, our life,
-give us loving hearts.
Jesus, our light,
-give us the grace to do "More." Amen



THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
November 13, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 21:5-9)

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.” “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?” He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

Reflection:

Conformity with Jesus’ words means that we hear the teachings of Jesus and live them out. We have to live *now* to create a future for ourselves that we want and that *God wants* for us. When we live in conformity to the Word, hearing Jesus’ words and living them out, the future holds no fear for us. Rather than fear, we anticipate our future with joyful expectation. On this second-to- last Sunday of the liturgical year, we realize that we have been faced with a choice throughout our journey during this past liturgical year: to be rooted in this world *or* in the words of Jesus. Our choices *do* make a difference. (Living Liturgy, p.246)

Vincentian Meditation:

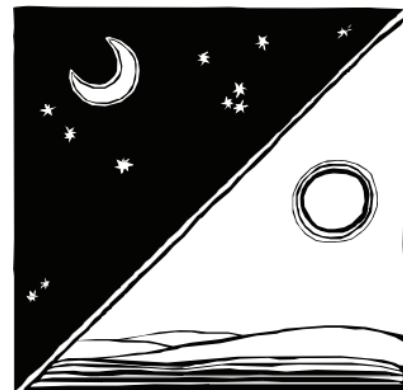
“On the journey of life, we must make choices. Our instincts, our selfishness, our pride will often suggest to us to follow them. It is an easier road. But Christ, His Church and our consciences suggest another way. To follow that road, we must say *no* to our natural instincts. It may be difficult and demand much effort, but that effort will bring with it a peace and contentment that money will not buy. Do we take the easy, downhill road in every choice we make? Sometimes we need to apply the brakes to downhill movements in our lives and try to change direction and to change gears. We do that by allowing Jesus to have a greater say in our lives, in our decisions, and in our thoughts.” (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 589-90)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Where do we need to allow Jesus to have a greater say in our lives, in our decisions, in our thoughts, and in our choices?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, our light,
 -guide us in our decisions.
Jesus, our joy,
 -guard us in our choices.
Jesus, our life,
 -root us in your words. Amen



THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING November 20, 2022

Gospel: (John 18:33-37)

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "*Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?*" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "*My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here.*" So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a King?" Jesus answered, "*You say I am a King. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.*"

Reflection:

Living the paschal mystery means that we see the victorious Christ even in the everyday trials and difficulties that we face. Living the paschal mystery means that we are ever faithful to the rhythm of dying and rising as it unfolds every day—in our *prayer*, work, leisure. Living the paschal mystery means that we are mediators for those whom we meet—that we are the body of Christ leading others to holier and happier lives. If someone should then ask us, "What have you done?" our answer would come quickly and surely—we have served our King. (Living Liturgy, p. 250)

Vincenzian Meditation:

As you serve Christ your King, *be an open door* that is fully open to others, especially the poor. Be an open door to the members in your Conference, that is, be *honest*, truthful and simple in your relationships with one another. Be an open door to all: allow people to use you, to pass through you. Allow people to take you for granted. Be an open door by being humble. An open door does not discriminate, allowing some to pass and some not. Open the door of your heart widely to those who claim a little more understanding from you. Open the door of your heart so widely that you can belong to the truth and listen to the voice of Jesus. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.113)

Discussion: (*Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How can you become more of an "open door"?

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray to Christ our King, source of compassion and love,
- **may we bring peace to all who have lost hope.**
For the wisdom to listen to God's voice,
- **may we become an open door to all.**
For the courage to work untiringly for peace and justice,
- **may your kingdom come! Amen**



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT November 27, 2022

Gospel: (Matthew 24:37-44)

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Reflection:

This time of year is filled with anticipation and waiting! The important questions for us are, "What do we anticipate?" and "How do we await?" Stores are filled with Christmas things. Lights and decorations have sprung up. Christmas music on the radio is another harbinger of the day for which we wait. Our work of preparation is busied with card-sending, party-planning and attending, and gift-shopping. The First Sunday of Advent, the Church's New Year, ushers in a different way of waiting, of heightened anticipation. We Christians don't wait for a what, but for a Whom. And that changes the character of our waiting! If the followers of Christ are vigilant and have lives "blameless in holiness," then when Christ comes they can "stand erect" without fear but with joyful anticipation of their redemption. This is the Whom and what of our waiting! (Living Liturgy, p. 2)

Vincentian Meditation:

Waiting in joyful anticipation...if we are to rejoice in the grace of God, we must have eyes that see and ears that hear. That in turn demands a reflecting heart, the sort of heart which Our Lady had and with which, she "pondered all things in her heart." Our Lady has a marvelous capacity for wonder. There can be no wonder in our lives without silence. We are called to the service of the poor, but our service must come from a heart which resembles that of Our Lady who knew how to be silent, who knew how to wonder, who knew who to marvel at the grace of God, without which we can do nothing. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 56)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How will you "await" in joyful anticipation, silence and wonder for Christmas this Advent?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, as we await the fulfillment of your promise,
-give us a heart that knows how to be silent.
You come as a visible sign of love,
-give us a heart that knows how to wonder.
Strengthen us by your grace,
-give us a heart that lives in joyful anticipation. Amen



FEAST OF SAINT CATHERINE LABOURE

November 28

Gospel: (Luke 12:32-34)

Jesus said to his disciples: *“Do not live in fear, little flock. It has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms. Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys. Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be.”*

Reflection:

St. Catherine Laboure entered the Daughters of Charity in 1830. When she was a novice, the Blessed Mother appeared to her several times in the Motherhouse Chapel asking that a medal be made in her honor. Although the Miraculous Medal *became* well known throughout the world, Sister Catherine devoted her life to the service of the poor elderly in silence and humility for forty-six years. She is known as the saint of silence, as she kept her secret of being the one who saw Mary until her death. She was a woman of profound prayer and service, a true “mystic in action” as a Daughter of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. She is, in a special way, the patroness of the elderly.

Vincenian Meditation:

Sr. Catherine wrote: “Whenever I go to the chapel, I put myself in the presence of our good Lord, and I say to him, ‘Lord I am here. Tell me what you would have *me to do.*’ *If he gives me some task, I am content and I thank him. If he gives me nothing, I still thank him since I do not deserve to receive anything more than that. And then, I tell God everything that is in my heart. I tell him about my pains and joys, and then I listen...*If you listen, God will also speak to you, for with the good Lord, you have to both speak and listen. God always speaks to you when you approach him plainly and simply.” (St. Catherine Laboure)

Discussion: (Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

In your prayer do you “speak and listen?” How has God directed you in your service to the poor - giving you a “task to do”?

Closing Prayer:

St. Catherine, servant of the sick and elderly poor,
-help us to grow in the virtue of humility.
St. Catherine, visionary of the Miraculous Medal,
-increase our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
St. Catherine, model of prayer and service,
-show us how to be contemplatives in action.
St. Catherine, woman of prayer,
-give us the grace to approach God plainly and simply.
Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 4, 2022

Gospel: (Matthew 3:1-12)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. "I baptize you with [b] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Reflection:

John the Baptist urges us to "Prepare the way of the Lord." Our culture tells us to prepare for the birth of a Baby, an event that evokes wonderful feelings of warmth and happiness. But John's message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" suggests that we must examine our lives in light of the salvation we seek. How do spend this special time of year, preparing the way for Him?

Vincenzian Meditation:

God speaks to us in all sorts of ways: through Scriptures, through his Church, but also through all the events, great and small, that happen to us. Since most of our lives are made up of very ordinary tasks which we must do each day, it is in these especially that the voice of the Lord is to be heard. We make the mistake so often of expecting God to speak to us through some great event or happening when, in fact, all the time He is speaking to us in all the small events of each day.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How has Advent been a time of recognizing and finding the presence of Christ in your life?

Closing Prayer:

Come Lord Jesus, give us the grace to,
-**trust in your loving presence and guidance.**
Come Lord Jesus, give us the grace to,
- **"Make ready the way of the Lord."**
As we eagerly await your coming, come to all people
-**especially the poor and the forgotten. Amen**



Regard the patience of our Lord.

2 Pt 3:15

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

December 8

Gospel: (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And he said to her, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age...for nothing is impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Reflection:

This festival in honor of Mary celebrates her innocence from the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb. Mary enjoyed a singular intimacy with God, for it was she who conceived by the Holy Spirit and carried in her womb for nine months the very Son of God. Her body—conceived in innocence and kept free from the stain of sin throughout her life—was a fitting temple to nurture the human life of the divine Son. Like Mary, we must respond to God's offer of graceful innocence with our own "Behold, I am the handmaid (servant) of the Lord." Then, like Mary, we too, bear the Son of God within us. She is the model for God-like innocence. She is our Mother and helps us attain for ourselves the fruits of her great privilege—Emmanuel, God is with us! (Living Liturgy, p.6)

Vincentian Meditation:

Frederic Ozanam had a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from his youth to his death. Frederic was insistent that the Society take Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as its patroness. The first members of the Society chose December 8th as their special Marian feast twenty years before the formal proclamation of the dogma in 1854 by Pope Blessed Pius IX and a year after Frederic's death! Vincentians implore Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, their patroness, to intercede for their Councils and Conferences, their lives and ministry. (SVDP Manual, p. 34-35)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How does our Conference show devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Through Mary, conceived without sin, we now lift our hearts and say,

-Holy God, hear our prayer.

Through Mary, queen of all saints,

-we ask for healing for those who are brokenhearted.

Through Mary, patroness of our Society,

-we ask for the grace of fidelity for all Vincentians in the world. Amen



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 11, 2022

Gospel: (Matthew 11:2-11)

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy[a] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Reflection:

The "good news" is a message of a topsy-turvy world. John baptizes and preaches to the crowds, the "common folk", and in answer to the question "What should we do?" he answers to the effect, "more than you would wish to do or that can be expected of you"—share what you have with those who have not. John's good news is that of a totally different way of seeing life. The question, "What should we do?" is asked three times in today's gospel, and the answer is invariable: reach out to the marginalized with whatever you have and they need. This is the good news of John, and it is identical to the good news Jesus preached. John directs our attention to Jesus and the inauguration of his ministry to the poor and those in need. And so we ask, "What should we do?" (Living Liturgy, p. 14)

Vincentian Meditation:

Sr. Rosalie said: "One night I dreamed that I stood at the judgment seat of God. He received me with great severity and was about to pronounce my sentence to perdition, when suddenly I was surrounded by an immense throng of persons carrying old shoes, hats, and clothing which they showed to God and said, 'She gave us all these things!' Then God looked at me and said, 'Because you gave all these old clothes in My Name, I open heaven to you. Enter, for all eternity!' (*White Wings and Barricades*, p.161)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

If we looked at Jesus and asked, "What should we do?" what answer would he give to us?

Closing Prayer:

As our Advent journey continues, we turn in hope to Christ and ask,

-Lord Jesus, what should we do?

Watch over all children, that they may know your love,

-Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay.

Strengthen all Vincentians in their efforts to reveal your love,

-Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay. Amen



Rejoice in the Lord always.

Ph 1:46

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 18, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 1:39-45)

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Reflection:

The gospel for this Fourth Sunday of Advent presents us with the meeting of two pregnant women, one older but no wiser about such things than the other quite young mother-to-be, for this was the first child for both. Such a meeting! The infant in Elizabeth's womb gave a mighty kick when Mary greeted her, and Elizabeth recognized the baby of Mary's womb as her Lord. Jesus, the Son of God Most High, became incarnate—took on human flesh—as a necessary step to salvation. Jesus's body was "prepared" as the fruit of Mary's womb. He came to "do God's will." Mary believed and it was fulfilled. She didn't count the cost. Neither can we. (Living Liturgy, p.18)

Vincentian Meditation:

The mystery of the Incarnation was the permanent inspiration of St. Vincent's life. It must be ours, too. We shall only fully see Christ in the poor when we have fully seen God in Christ. That is why all that we do and say will have meaning only if it is born of our relationship with Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man. What we bring to the poor must be more than a program for the betterment of their material and economic condition. We must bring something of the peace, the joy and the spiritual freedom which we ourselves have experienced from being present to Jesus Christ through prayer and the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. I hope that through giving some time this Christmas to the poor and lonely—often a listening heart is of more value than money—you will have enriched the lives of some of those millions of people who have so much less to eat than we have, and so much less to live for. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.49-50)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have we brought peace and joy to the poor this Advent?

Closing Prayer:

As we prepare for Christmas we pray for those who live in doubt,
-may our lives be a sign of faith.

We pray for those who live in fear and oppression,
-may our lives be a sign of hope.

We pray for those who do not experience God's love,
-may our lives be a sign of charity. Amen



CHRISTMAS December 25

Gospel: (John 1:1-18)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and[b] is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Reflection:

Why do we wish each other "Merry Christmas"? Surely, not because Jesus was born into a perfect world and not because we have a perfect world or perfect families today. "Merry Christmas"? Perhaps not for all. But because of Jesus, *all* of us can celebrate a Christmas that is joyful and blessed. The Savior of the world was born during the night of the year when darkness is the longest. Jesus comes for the people in dark places. The real, lasting, and deep joy is that the Light shines there. That is why we can say to each other "Merry Christmas"! (Living Liturgy, p.24)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways have we shared with the poor our own deep personal conviction of the kingdom of God?

Closing Prayer:

On this day, joy was reborn into the world,
-may we share the joy of Christ with everyone.

On this day, hope was reborn into the world,
-may we bring the hope of Christ to those who are poor.

On this day, love was reborn into the world,
--may we bring the love of Christ to our family and our world. Amen



THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

December 26, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 2:41-52)

The parents of Jesus used to go every year to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover... and as they were returning at the end of the feast, the child Jesus remained behind unknown to his parents. Thinking he was in the party, they continued their journey for a day, looking for him among their relatives. Not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. On the third day they came upon him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligence and his answers. His Mother said to him "Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow." He said to them: "*Why did you search for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Father's house?*" But they did not grasp what he said to them.

Reflection:

Parenting is a great entry into the paschal mystery! Good parents spend their children's growing up years emptying themselves of their own desires for the sake of the well-being of their children, endlessly and willingly sacrificing for them. Then, when the children are adults, parents must be willing to "let go" so that the children can be about their own business. By letting go, parents can help their children know their true identity is that they really belong to God. Thus can they find their real place in the world. Family is about relationships. A holy family is one in which their relationships include God at the center. (Living Liturgy, p.30)

Vincenian Meditation:

In his great joy Frederic wrote about his first-born, Marie, his observations proclaiming the unconscious apostolate of children, which, in God's providence is to make parents richer and stronger spiritually. "We will begin her education early," wrote Frederic, "and at the same time, she will begin ours; for I perceive that Heaven has sent her to us to teach us a great deal, and to make us better. I cannot look upon that face, so full of innocence and purity, without seeing the sacred impression of the Creator...How could I dare teach her lessons that I did not practice? Could God have found a kinder way of instructing me, of correcting me, of setting my feet on the road to heaven?" (Frederic Ozanam: *Derum, Apostle in a Top Hat*, p.186)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you found that children do "teach us a great deal and make us better?"

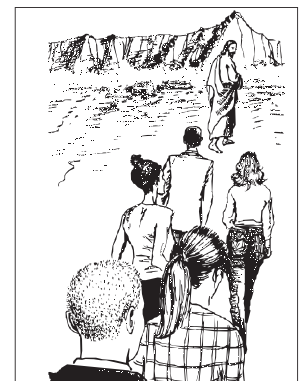
Closing Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for the children who have touched our lives,
-may they grow in age, wisdom and grace.

Jesus, thank you especially for grandchildren,
-may they grow in age, wisdom and grace.

Jesus, thank you for "instructing and correcting us" through children,

-may we all grow in age, wisdom and grace. Amen



Closing Prayers

Jesus taught us to call God our Father and so we have the courage to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Prayer of Service

Lord Jesus, in service You washed the feet of Your disciples, offering us a model of humility, love, and respect. Open our hearts to Your presence in those we assist. That we may offer them the same spirit of dedicated service, compassion and love You showed. May we, through our actions of service and generosity, lighten their burdens by providing for their immediate necessities and offering them hope, peace and justice.

Prayers for Christian Unity

Lord Jesus Christ, at Your last supper You prayed to the Father that all should be one. Send Your Holy Spirit upon all who bear Your name and seek to serve You. Strengthen our faith in You and make us love one another in humility. May we who have been reborn in one baptism, all be united in one faith under one shepherd and continue to be inspired by the founders of the Society.

Canonisation of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

Father, we pray that Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Through the intercession of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam we offer our prayers and intentions. If it is Your will, may the holiness of Your faithful servant Frédéric be recognised by the church through his canonisation.

Pause to offer our personal prayers...

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

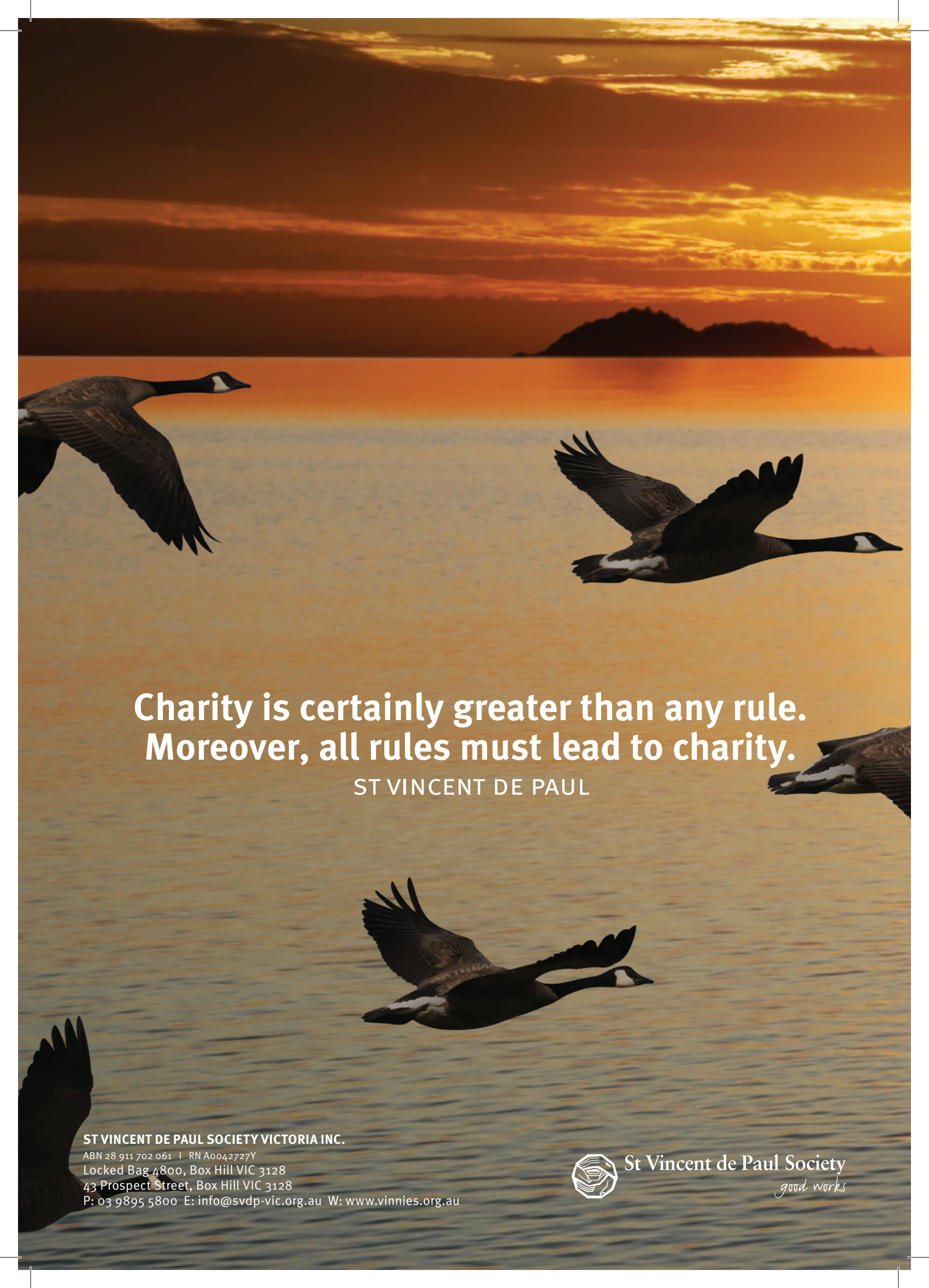
Litany

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Most sacred heart of Jesus | Have mercy on us |
| Immaculate heart of Mary | Pray for us |
| Saint Joseph | Pray for us |
| Saint Vincent de Paul | Pray for us |
| Saint Louise de Marillac | Pray for us |
| Saint Mary MacKillop | Pray for us |
| Blessed Frédéric Ozanam | Pray for us |
| Blessed Rosalie Rendu | Pray for us |

May the souls of our departed members and all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace.

In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.





**Charity is certainly greater than any rule.
Moreover, all rules must lead to charity.**

ST VINCENT DE PAUL

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY VICTORIA INC.

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St Vincent de Paul Society

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